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**JOHN CALVIN'S**  
**COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS.**  
**VOL. III.**



**A COMMENTARY**  
**ON**  
**THE PSALMS OF DAVID**  
**BY**  
**JOHN CALVIN.**

**IN THREE VOLUMES.**

**VOL. III.**

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# JOHN CALVIN'S

## COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS.

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### PSALM CI.

*Although David were not yet settled in the kingdom, still, as he was already created king by God's appointment, he frames and addresses himself to the best manner of governing. And he not only stirs up himself to perform his kingly office by this godly musing, but also, making a vow to God, promises to become his faithful minister, that he may obtain speedy possession.*

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee,  
O Lord, will I sing.

2 I will deal wisely in a perfect way, till thou  
come unto me: I will walk in the soundness of my  
heart in the midst of my house.

3 I will set no wrongful thing before mine eyes:  
I hate the work of them that step aside, it shall not  
cleave unto me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me; I will  
not know evil.

5 Whosoever backbiteth his neighbour privily,  
him will I destroy: whosoever is haughty of coun-  
tenance, and wide of heart, him cannot I abide.

1 *I will sing, &c.*] That he makes mention of singing, the readers must understand it thus; that he utters in this Psalm what he had mused upon with himself, that is, what manner of king he intended to be as soon as he should have obtained the promised kingdom. Therefore, to sing of mercy and judgment, imports as much as to testify in solemn form of words, that he would be a just and upright king. Austin takes it in a sense too refined, that God is to be praised, whether he punish men sharply, or whether he

shew himself merciful to them. But David treats not here of God's secret judgments, but of the proper government of the kingdom, so that he might obey his calling as well in word as in deed. When he says, *unto thee, O Lord, will I sing*, he acknowledges himself to have been appointed to so glorious and honourable a charge by the benefit of God; for it had been an act of overweening temerity to have obtruded himself of his own mere motion. And not unfitly does he comprehend all princely virtues, in these two parts of mercy and judgment: for as it is the chief duty of a king to yield every man his right, so also is there required in him a considerate love and gentleness towards his subjects. And therefore not without cause does Solomon say *that a king's throne is established by mercy*, Proverbs, xvi. 12.

2 *I will deal wisely, &c.*] Here David gives us to understand that he weighs thoroughly how oppressive a burden was laid upon him when he was made king. We know, yea and experience shews, that almost all kings are inebriated with their own pomp; neither was it for nought used as a by-word in old time, that a king must be born either a lord or a lout, which saying was doubtless misconstrued, because it commonly falls out that such as have the sovereignty are fools and dolts. And truly it is a notable vengeance of God that beasts and such as are unworthy to be accounted in the number of men, are commonly in highest authority. But though kings are not born fools, yet does their dignity blind them, so that they think they are nought indebted to their subjects, so that they may vaunt themselves insolently, drown themselves recklessly in their imaginary pleasures, and at length utterly forget themselves. David therefore says, *he will deal wisely*, or, which is the same, be very wary and well-advised; because it is a rare virtue for him that may do what he list, to keep such a hold of himself as to allow himself no more than he ought to do. He therefore that has the law in his own hand, and yet essays not the extent of his power for mischief, but bridles himself by self-control, is endued with true understanding, and consequently shews that he will not be like other kings, whom their own dignity infatuates; but according to the greatness of his charge, will do his diligence to fulfil his duty wisely. And it is to be noted that he makes the perfect way or righteousness to be the groundwork of wisdom. Whereby we gather, that to godward, tyrants have no wisdom at all, who employ their talents to wicked wiles, and devise daily new methods to burden and oppress their subjects; in a word, who are clever only in doing harm. Though many dislike such craftiness, yet doubtless it is

deemed the best wisdom and extolled with highest commendations, if kings are intent on enlarging the bounds of their realms, and are masters in refined policy. But David covets no other wisdom, than such as is the mistress of uprightness. *Till thou come.* These words are read two ways: some translate it interrogatively, *when wilt thou come?* as though David should request to be put off no longer. And truly, he had just cause to groan and lament, when he saw himself so long pinched with penury, and driven from place to place a wretched exile. For it had been better for him to live unknown in his father's cottage, as he did before when he was a herdsman, than to be anointed king to be driven out of his country, and to live in utter dishonour and hatred. But I had rather read it without interrogation, *until*, or *since that*; and yet even this I interpret somewhat otherwise than most men do; namely, that though David continue still a private person, and enjoy not as yet the princely state that was promised him, yet ceases he not to follow uprightness, meanwhile. The sense therefore is this; Lord, though thou keep me long in suspense, yet will I nevertheless apply my heart to uprightness. And thus he contrasts *the midst of his house* with palaces and public buildings, as if he should say, within the walls of his own private house.

3 *I will set, &c.*] After he has made profession that he will be a follower of virtue and righteousness in his own person, according also as it becomes good princes to begin at this point, now he adds, that in bearing the office of prince, he will become an enemy to wrongful dealing and wickedness: for to set before one's eyes the thing that is wrongful, imports as much as to purpose to do the thing that is wicked. Therefore he proclaims that he will be utterly against all wickedness; as doubtless no man can become a just and upright punisher of misdealing, but he that utterly abhors it in his heart. Whence it follows, that kings execute not their duty, except they are clear from all consent to wickedness. Some join *לעין* to it, supplying the letter *ל*, as if he had said, I will not set before mine eyes any wickedness to do the same; no unholiness shall be acceptable to me, to execute it. But the other sense is more probable, that after David has protested that he will suffer no iniquity in his sight, he adds immediately by way of confirmation, that he will become an enemy to all misdoings. In the last member there is a change of the number, if you refer it to the persons of them that step aside. Nevertheless it may fitly be expounded of the work itself; as if he

had said he would have no alliance at all with any manner of ungodly backslidings.

4 *A froward heart, &c.*] Some take a froward heart to be spoken of false-hearted men, but I reject it as constrained, besides, the context rejects it. For as he has added immediately in the way of exposition, *I will not know evil*, doubtless in the former member he avouches, that he will be free from falsehood and wickedness. And the effect is, that David will do his endeavour to rid his hands of all misdealing, and also to be ignorant of what it is to do wrong to his neighbours.

5 *Whosoever backbiteth, &c.*] In this verse he treats more evidently of the duty of a king, who is armed with the sword to restrain the evil-doers. For although backbiting, pride, and all vices are justly displeasing to all good men, yet belongs it not to every one of them to cut off the proud or the backbiters, because they are not endued with public authority, but have their hands tied up. And this distinction must be borne in mind, that God's children may hold themselves within the bounds of moderation, and none of them pass beyond the limits of his own calling. For surely as long as David lived in the state of a subject, he never durst take this thing upon him. But as soon as he was installed in the chair of state, he received a sword at God's hand, which he might draw to punish evil-doings. And he points out certain particulars, that by the figure synecdoche he might intimate that he would be a punisher of all wickednesses. Privy and clandestine backbiting is a noisome plague above all others: for it is, as if a man should kill by secret treachery; nay rather, a backbiter crushes men unawares, no less than a poisoner. And this is a sign of a froward and traitorous nature, so to hurt another man's good name, as that the party may have no opportunity to defend himself. Therefore as this mischief prevails on all hands, though it is an intolerable plague in the life of men, David takes upon him to punish it: and afterwards he characterizes proud men by two forms of expression. He calls them *haughty of countenance*, not because every proud man looks always aloft, but because they commonly betray the haughtiness of their hearts by the loftiness of their looks. And he terms them *wide of heart*, because they must needs be puffed up and swollen who gape after great things: for nothing is enough with them, unless they may swallow up the whole world. And hereby we gather, that right order cannot flourish, unless princes watch narrowly to suppress pride, which of necessity draws after it both fierceness and cruelty, and engenders contumely,

rapine, and all kinds of misdealing. Whereby it will come to pass, that simple and quiet men would be exposed to the lust of the mightier, except princes set their authority against it to repress their boldness. Now seeing it is God's will that princes should hate pride, it is certain that he himself also hateth it. And therefore he requireth a gentle meekness at his children's hands, because he is the declared enemy of all who strive to exalt themselves higher than their condition admits.

6 Mine eyes are toward the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me : he that walketh in the sound way shall serve me.

7 He that worketh wiles shall not dwell in the midst of mine house : he that speaketh untruths shall not abide in my sight.

8 Betimes will I destroy all the wicked of the land, to thrust all the workers of iniquity out of the city of the Lord.

6 *Mine eyes, &c.*] He sets down another virtue of a wise prince, saying he will endeavour to have the faithful of the land near him to use their advice, and also to have upright ministers. Some take this part, *that they may dwell with me*, generally, in this sense; I will not neglect the good and virtuous, nor suffer them to be vexed wrongfully; but I will bring to pass that they shall live in quiet under me. But his meaning is rather that he will make selection, and not take to him either these or those indiscriminately, but wisely distinguish the qualities of men, that he may have those that are of godly conversation nearest about him, and put them in the chief offices of state. And he places the *faithful* in the first rank; because, though a man excel in talents, yet if he be not given to faithfulness and uncorrupt dealing, he shall never behave himself well in judgment. And it is worth noting, because though the prince be never so good, yet shall his subjects hardly be partakers of his uncorruptness, except his officers correspond with him. For as the officers are the hands of the prince, whatsoever he determines, that will they traitorously overthrow, if they are either covetous or crafty, or extortioners, which is too well known by experience. Most kings, indeed, passing over the good and virtuous, or rather civilly dismissing them to a distance, purposely seek officers like themselves, and fit instruments for their tyranny; yea, and even good and well-disposed princes also are found to be so irresolute that they

are ruled by the worst counsels, and thoughtlessly invest the unworthy with public offices.

7 *He that worketh, &c.*] This verse may be taken as well of all magistrates that execute public judgments, as of household servants. But as he had spoken just now generally of all officers, he seems now to speak peculiarly of the king's court. For hence come all corruptions, if the chief councillors of kings, and other his companions who have possession of his ear, are deceitful and crafty, then will they by their example as it were lift up the banner of licentiousness. And it is not possible that he who cannot keep his own house in good order should be able to hold a whole realm in awe. For the authority which even at home cannot sustain itself, falls into contempt in state affairs.

8 *Betimes, &c.*] In the end he concludes that he will do his utmost endeavour to cleanse the land from vile and wicked men. And he says *betimes*, because if princes are supine and slothful, they shall not encounter mischiefs in time to redress them. They must therefore withstand beginnings, provided always that the judge do nothing upon private displeasure, nor rush on with inconsiderate haste. Also by the plural number unremitted exertion is denoted, because it were not enough for a judge to punish the wicked once or twice sorely and sharply, except he were perseveringly intent on this duty. And by this saying is condemned the slothfulness of princes, when they see wicked men rush daringly into crime, and yet either for fear or affection wink at them from day to day. Therefore let kings and magistrates bear in mind that they are armed with the sword, that they should execute God's judgments stoutly and speedily. David could not, indeed, purge the land from all defilements, though he had applied himself never so courageously to the matter. But he promises only to become a strait judge to take away all the ungodly without any respect of persons: oftentimes fear is a hindrance to judges that they cannot manfully enough suppress the frowardness of the wicked. Wherefore they had need to be endued with the spirit of invincible fortitude, so that upon assurance of God's help they may go through with the charge enjoined them. Again, ambition and favour make them pliable, so that they do not punish offences uniformly when they ought. Hereby we gather how greatly the strictness that exceeds not due measure pleaseth God, and again how God liketh not the cruel kindness which gives loose reins to the wicked, as in truth there is no greater enticement to sin than impunity. Therefore they must remember this saying of Solomon's, Prov. xvii. 15; *He that acquitteth the wicked, and he that condemn-*

*eth the guiltless, are both abominable before God.* Very forcible also is that which he adds, *that I may thrust all the offenders out of the city of God.* For if even heathen kings are commanded in common to punish wickedness, David knew himself to be bound by a more sacred bond, considering he was set over the church of God. And truly, they that hold that place of honour, if they employ not every effort to purge away uncleanness, defile God's holy place as much as in them lies; and not only behave themselves unfaithfully towards men, by betraying their welfare, but also commit high treason against God himself. Now, as David's kingdom was but a faint image of Christ's kingdom, we must set Christ before us, who, although he bear with many hypocrites, yet, as he shall be judge of the whole world, will one day call all men to account, and separate the lambs from the goats. And if he seem to make somewhat too long tarrying, we must bethink us of that morning which shall dawn suddenly, that all filthiness being cleansed away, true purity may shine forth.

## PSALM CII.

*This prayer seems to have been given to the faithful when they languished in the Babylonish captivity. First, they sorrowfully and humbly bewail their own afflictions, and afterwards commend the restitution of the holy city and of the temple to God. And that they may make their prayers with the greater confidence, they bethink them of God's promises concerning the happy setting up again as well of the kingdom as of the priesthood: and they not only assure themselves of deliverance from captivity, but also pray God to bring kings and nations under their dominion. Finally, interposing a brief complaint concerning their sorrowful and miserable state, they seek comfort at God's everlastingness, because, in adopting his servants to a better hope, he hath separated them from the common lot of men.*

*[A Prayer for the afflicted when he shall be in distress, and pour out his thoughts before the Lord.]*

2 O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee.

3 Hide not thy face from me in the day of my trouble; bow down thine ear unto me: in the day that I call make haste, answer me.

*A prayer, &c.]* Whichsoever of the prophets was the author of this Psalm, it is certain that he endited it in the



form of praying for the restoration of the temple and the city. Some restrain it to the time when the building of the temple was hindered by the nations that bordered upon Judah; however, I like it not, but rather think the Psalm was made before the return of the people, when the time of their promised deliverance was now at hand. For then began the prophets to be more earnest in lifting up the hearts of the godly, according to this prophecy of Isaiah, *iv. 1; Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, shall your God say.* And it was the prophet's purpose not only to encourage the people to confidence, but also to make them have a care and regard of the welfare of the church. And the title of the Psalm shews to what use and end it was destined. For they that translate it in the time past, *A prayer for the afflicted when he was in trouble, and poured out his thoughts*, seem to render the sense improperly. Nay rather, he meant to comfort the sorrow of those whose hearts he saw dismayed; as if he should say, Although they were distressed with heaviness and despair, yet was there place for them to pray. Some translate the word *כִּשְׁמוֹ*, *when he shall hide himself*, and think that there is metaphorically expressed the gesture of him that prays, when not daring to lift up his face for grief, he bows himself, and as it were hides his head in his bosom. But in my opinion it seems an appropriate allusion, when on the one side are described distresses of mind, and on the other, the pouring out of prayers; that we may know how the gate is so far from being shut against our prayers when we are so distressed with sorrow that we shun the light and company of men, that even then is the very fit time to pray, because the one great alleviation of our griefs is, freely to pour out our hearts before God. Indeed, the word *חַשַּׁב* is often taken for *to pray*, but as it signifies *to think upon a thing*, the noun that is derived from it is properly here a *musings* or *thinking upon a thing*. Furthermore, it is to be noted that by these words the Israelites were admonished in what frame of mind they ought to be when they thought upon this manner of praying, as if he had said he prescribed it to those only who were grieved for the overthrow of the church.

2 *O Lord, hear, &c.*] This earnestness shews again that these words were not penned for them to pour out when they were careless and merry, for that had been a gross mocking of God. For in so speaking they testify that they endure sore pangs, and burn with great longing to obtain release. Wherefore no man could utter these words with his mouth, without blaspheming God's name, unless there went an earnest affection of the mind with it. And the cir-

cumstance of the place that I spoke of is to be noted, how we are awakened up by the Holy Ghost at such time as God is to be sued to for the common welfare of the church. For when each man has charge but of his own private matters, scarce the hundredth person is grieved at the miseries of the church as he ought to be. So much the more therefore have we need of incitements, according as we see that the prophet heaps a great number of words together to correct our coldness and sloth. I grant it were the duty of the heart to move and direct the tongue unto praying; but as it often faints, or executes its duty slowly and lazily, it has need of the tongue to help it. Here, therefore, is a sort of reciprocation, for as the heart must go before the words, and frame them, so also does the tongue help the dulness of the heart. Indeed it may often come to pass that the faithful pray not only earnestly, but fervently, and yet no language shall pass out of the mouth; nevertheless, it is not to be doubted but that by *calling*, the prophet means the vehemence into which sorrow compels men to burst forth.

3 *Hide not, &c.*] That they desire God not to hide his face, is not superfluous. For as the people had languished now almost threescore and ten years in captivity, God's favour might seem to be utterly turned away from them. But in their extreme affliction they are enjoined nevertheless to resort to prayer, as their only remedy. For they say they call in the day of their trouble, not as hypocrites are wont, who murmur tumultuously, but because they feel themselves to be called even then by God. *Make haste, answer.* As I have spoken elsewhere more at large of these expressions, it may now suffice to understand briefly that God dealeth exceeding tenderly with us when he giveth us leave to lay open our infirmities before him without reserve, and beareth with our fondness. Surely, it were very unbeseeming his majesty to whimper before him like babes, unless he of his own accord gave us leave to do so. I use the said term *whimpering* purposely, that the weak, who are afraid to approach God, may know that they are allured so gently, lest anything might hinder them from familiar access to him.

4 For my days are consumed as smoke, and my bones are burnt up as a hearth.

5 My heart is smitten, and withered as grass, because I have forgotten to eat my bread.

6 By reason of the noise of my groaning, my bones are clung to my flesh.

7 I became like a pelican of the wilderness ; I have been like an owl of the deserts.

8 I watched, and was as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.

4 *For my days, &c.*] These expressions are indeed hyperbolical, but yet such as truly convey how sorely the desolation of the church ought to wound the minds of the godly. And in this behalf let every man examine himself thoroughly. For except we prefer the church before all other cares, we are unworthy to be accounted among the members of it. And as often as we meet with these forms of speech, we must bear in mind that we are upbraided with our own slothfulness, in that we are less grieved with the distresses of the church than we ought to be. He likens his days to smoke, and his bones to the stones of the hearth, which are consumed in process of time by the fire. And by bones he means whatsoever strength is in man. And doubtless, if they were not void of feeling, it could not be but that that sad spectacle of God's wrath must dry up their bones, and waste away all their vigour.

5 *My heart is, &c.*] Now follows a third similitude, wherein he says his heart is withered and utterly dried up like a herb that is smitten. But the prophet meant to express something further than if he had said that his heart was withered, and his bones reduced to dryness ; namely, that as the grass when it is cut down can no more receive sap from the earth, nor retain the life which is derived from its root, even so means he that his heart being as it were plucked up, or cut up, is destitute of its natural nourishments. *I forgot to eat, &c.* That is to say, My sorrow was so great that I neglected my ordinary meat. Truly, the faithful did eat in their captivity, and to have starved themselves for hunger had been a token of wicked despair. But his meaning is, that he was so distressed with sorrow, that he refused all delights, insomuch that he curtailed himself of his meat and drink. Now though the faithful forsake their accustomed food, when they pray humbly for the turning away of God's wrath, by voluntary fasting, yet does not the prophet speak here of that kind of abstinence from food, but such as extremity of sadness brings together with the loathing of food and a weariness of all things. In the end he adds that his body was as it were pining away, so that his bones clove to his skin.

7 *I became like, &c.*] Instead of the word *pelican*, some put *an ostrich*, and some *a cuckoo*; and instead of *owl*, the Greek translator has rendered it *a night-crow*. But as they are birds unknown to the Jews also, it is enough to understand simply, that by this verse are betokened melancholy birds that keep in the coverts of mountains and wildernesses, whose note is so far from being delightful and sweet, that it rather inspires horror; as if he should say, he was removed from the company of men, and become in a manner like a wild beast in the woods. And truly, though the faithful dwelt in a land cultivated and fruitful, yet is it a certainty that all Chaldea and Assyria was to them as a wilderness, since the temple and their country whence they were cast, held their minds as it were fast bound to them. The third similitude taken from a sparrow denotes grief that is full of unquietness. For although צפור signify any kind of bird, yet doubt I not but it is taken here for a sparrow. And he terms him *alone* in respect that he is uncoupled from his mate; and we know that those little birds take the want of their mates so much to heart, that their sorrow in a manner surpasses all sorrow.

9 Mine enemies reviled me daily; and being mad upon me have sworn by me.

10 For I have eaten dust as bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

11 At the sight of thy displeasure and thy wrath: because thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

12 My days are like a shadow that goeth down; and I am withered as grass.

9 *Mine enemies, &c.*] The faithful procure themselves commiseration by this circumstance, namely, that they not only are a laughing-stock, but also a cursing to their enemies. Of this indignity therefore, that is, that the ungodly bear themselves so reproachfully towards the chosen people of God that they borrow from their misfortunes a form of swearing, the prophet complains in this place. And it was the same as if they should take the Jews as a signal example of cursing. At this day then, when the ungodly give a loose rein to their frowardness just as they did then, let us learn to arm ourselves with these weapons, therewith to vanquish this kind of temptation however severe it may be: for the Holy Ghost by enditing this form of praying meant to testify that by such revilings God is moved to succour us; even as is to be seen in Isaiah, xxxvii. 23; *Whom hast thou reviled,*

*and on whom hast thou railed; against whom hast thou lift up thy voice? even against the Holy One of Israel.* And in the verse next before he had said, *He hath despised thee, O daughter of Sion; against thee hath he shaken his head, O daughter of Jerusalem.* Surely it is an inestimable comfort, that God through the frowardness of our enemies is the more kindled to gird himself to help us. In the second member he expresses more plainly the cruelty of his enemies, saying they are mad. And as the word לָלַךְ signifies for the most part *to praise*, it might be construed by the contrary, *they dispraised me.* But it is better to follow that which is most received. And when some suppose that they were called mad who betrayed their own perverseness, so that it appeared by the very deed that they were worthless men, or rather but dregs and chaff, it seems too much wrested. Therefore let the former sense suffice, that is, that the faithful charge the foul-tongued with spitefulness or outrageous hatred.

10 *For I have eaten, &c.]* Some think the order is transposed, and that the sign of similitude כּ, which is put before אֶרֶץ, ought to be set before עֵפֶר; as if it had been said, I find no more savour in my bread than in dust; and that because the heaviness of the heart engenders loathing of meat. But the simpler meaning is, that they who lay prostrate upon the ground, so that they did as it were lick the earth, ate dust instead of bread. For we know it was an ordinary matter with such as mourned to lie with their faces upon the ground. Howbeit the prophet meant to express another thing, namely, that when he should go to his meals there was no table set for him, but his bread was flung upon the ground to him, in a wretched manner. Therefore in the person of the faithful he says he so clove to the ground that he rose not up so much as to take his meat. Whereto also pertains the latter member, *that he mingled his drink with weeping:* for whereas mourners are wont to restrain their sorrow for a little time while they refresh themselves with meat, the prophet says he had no respite from mourning. Some read not in the first member, *as bread*, but *in bread*, and as there is a great likeness between כּ and כּ, I prefer that reading, because it answers better to the second member.

11 *At the sight, &c.]* Now the prophet expresses how the greatness of his grief grew not simply from his annoyances and miseries, but the sense of the punishment laid upon him by God. And surely nothing ought to wound us so sore as when we feel God displeased with us. It is as much therefore as if the prophet should speak thus; Lord, I not only

consider the things that worldlings might bethink them of, but rather I turn to the consideration of thy wrath, for unless thou wert against us we should enjoy the heritage that thou gavest us, whereof thy displeasure hath justly dispossessed us. And it is a profitable warning when God striketh us with his own hand, not only to groan at the stripes as foolish men are wont to do, but chiefly to weigh the cause, that we may be deeply humbled. The latter member admits a two-fold sense: for as we raise up on high what we purpose to dash more violently against the ground, a forcible throwing down might be denoted in such words as these; Thou hast crushed me sorer with throwing me headlong from on high, than if I had been but pushed down from my standing. But it seems to be another amplification of his grief: for as nothing is more bitter than to be plucked down from a happy state, and to be cast into utter misery, the prophet complains piteously here that God's people were bereft of the glorious benefits wherewith they had been adorned in times past, so that the very remembrance of God's benefits, which should have been to their comfort, embittered their sorrow. Neither was it an act of ingratitude to make God's former benefits a matter of greater grief, seeing they acknowledged themselves to be brought to that miserable and shocking state of destitution through their own fault. For God delighteth not in changing, that he should disappoint us of his goodness as soon as he hath given us a brief taste of it. But as his goodness is exhaustless, so also would his blessing flow continually upon us, if our sins did not break off the course of it. Therefore though the remembrance of God's benefits ought to assuage our sorrows, that does not hinder but that it may the more grieve us to be fallen from on high when it is apparent that we have provoked God's displeasure, so that he was fain to withdraw his liberal and bountiful hand from us. So when we bethink us that the image of God which shone conspicuously in Adam was the brightness of his heavenly glory, and on the contrary part remember the shameful disfigurement with which God hath branded us in token of his wrath, surely this comparison must needs wound us the more keenly. Therefore as often as God, stripping us of the ornaments which he had bestowed upon us, giveth us up to reproach, let us learn that we have so much the greater cause to lament, because we have through our own fault turned light into darkness.

12 *My days are, &c.*] We know that while the sun is directly over our heads, that is, at the very noontide, there are not seen so sudden alterations of shadows; but when the sun draweth towards the west, the shadows vary almost every



moment. This is the reason why he terms it expressly, *a shadow that goeth down*. Now though what the prophet attributes to the person of the afflicted church, seems to belong to all other men without exception, yet this consideration had a special force in the calamity of exile. True it is that as soon as we verge towards old age, we soon fall into decay. But the prophet makes his mean that this befell the people of God in the very flower of their age. For under the name of *days* he denotes the whole race of their life, as if he should say that the captivity was as it were a setting sun to the godly, because they decayed apace. At length he repeats the similitude of the withered grass which he had used a little before, meaning that their life in the captivity was wrapped in sorrows that burned up even the very sap of life. And no marvel, since that state of life had been worse than a hundred deaths, if they had not been sustained by the hope of deliverance to come. Now though they were not utterly overwhelmed with temptation, yet must it be no light grief that they conceived for being abandoned by God.

13 And thou, Lord, shalt dwell for evermore ; and the memorial of thee to generation and generation.

14 Thou wilt arise, and have pity upon Sion : because the time to pity her, because the appointed time, is come.

15 For thy servants have a love to her stones, and will have pity of her dust.

13 *And thou, Lord, &c.*] That the prophet, purposing to cheer himself with hope, sets before him the eternal state of God, seems a far-fetched comfort. For what is that to us if God sit unchangeable and always the same on his heavenly throne, seeing that in the meanwhile our frail and transitory state suffers not us to stand unmoved for a moment? Nay rather, from the knowledge of the blessed tranquillity which God enjoyeth, it appears more clearly that our life is a mere illusion. But the prophet in calling to remembrance the promises whereby God had avouched that he would have regard of the church, and especially that notable article of the covenant, Exod. xxv. 8, *I will dwell in the midst of you*, hesitates not, upon trust of that holy and indissoluble bond, to make all the godly, who lay in abject grief, fellows and partakers of the heavenly glory which God inhabiteth. And hereto also pertains the term *memorial*. For what good would it do us, that God's being continues everlastingly,



unless the knowledge of him lived in our hearts, that knowledge of him which being formed from his gracious covenant, engenders affiance of mutual relationship betwixt him and us. Let this therefore be the sum, that though we are like withered hay, decaying every moment, and being always at death's door, or rather dwelling already as it were in the grave, yet because God hath established a covenant with us whereby he hath promised to be the defender of his people, and hath allied himself to us, upon condition that he would dwell always among us, we must be of good cheer; and though if we depend upon ourselves, there remains nothing but utter despair, yet must we lift up our minds to the heavenly throne, from whence God will at length reach out his hand to us. Whosoever is but moderately exercised in the scriptures, will acknowledge that as often as we are besieged with many deaths, we must think thus, that as God continueth always like himself, and no shadow can obscure him, nothing can hinder him from helping us, and he will doubtless do it because we have his word by which he hath bound himself to us, and because he hath deposited with us his own memorial that contains the holy and inseparable league.

14 *Thou wilt arise, &c.*] This is the reasoning I spoke of: God is eternal, therefore he will have mercy on Sion. And the eternity is to be seen in his memorial or word, where he hath bound himself to take upon him the maintenance of our welfare. Moreover, as he wanteth not the power, nor is it possible that he should be contrary to himself, it is not to be doubted but he will in time convenient perform that which he hath promised. I have told you heretofore, that the word *arise* is referred to the very experience which appears unto us. For though he rest unchangeable, yet while putting forth his power, he sheweth his majesty by outward act, as they term it. And the prophet, when he treats of the restoration of the church, sets down God's mercy as the cause of it, though he makes it of two sorts, and therefore uses different words. As concerning the first kind of mercy, the manner of it is this: because men's deservings have no place here, and there is not any other thing that can lead God to build up his church, he takes a cause from his own free goodness. Afterwards, he adds the second kind of mercy which was coupled with his promises; *Thou then wilt have pity, because the time foreset by thy good pleasure is at hand.* In the meanwhile, it was the prophet's purpose to extol God's mercy, that the faithful might know that their welfare was included in it only. But now we must see what time he means, for *מן* signifies all manner of set or appointed days. There is no doubt then but he has an eye to

the prophecy that is read in Jeremiah, xxix. 12, and repeated in the second book of the Chronicles the last chapter and tenth verse. For lest the faithful might have quailed by reason of the long continuance of their miseries, it was needful for them to have this hope to lean upon, that God had foreset an end of their captivity, so that it should not last above threescore and ten years. And we see that Daniel was occupied with this thought, when he purposed to pray for the restoration of the church; Dan. ix. 2. In like manner also it was the prophet's purpose at this time, in order to encourage himself and others to pray fearlessly, to allege the said notable prophecy before God, that he would make an end of their sorrowful captivity. And verily, unless in praying we always bethink us of God's promises, we do but fling our requests into the air like smoke. At the same time it is to be noted that though the time of the promised deliverance approached, or were already fulfilled, yet the prophet ceases not from praying, whereunto God stirreth us up by his word. And though the time were stipulated, yet does the prophet in suchwise call upon God for performance of his covenant, as that he ceases not to seek refuge in his mere goodness, because the promises wherewith he bindeth himself to perform do in nowise dim the brightness of his grace.

15 *For thy servants, &c.*] That this should be restrained to Cyrus and Darius, is ridiculous, and I marvel that some of our contemporaries have subscribed to so insipid a conjecture. For it is no strange matter for the rabbins to hunt with over-eager zeal after foolish quiddities. I know that in some places the wicked are called God's servants, as in Jeremiah, xxv. 9, because he executeth his judgments by their hands. Nay, I confess that Cyrus is by name called God's chosen servant, Isaiah, xlv. 28, but yet would not the Holy Ghost have vouchsafed so honourable a title either to him, or Darius, without a qualification. Again, it is probable that the Psalm was made before the publishing of the commission for the return of the people. Therefore only the faithful are reckoned simply in the register of God's servants, because their purpose all their life long is to be obedient to God's calling. Truly I doubt not but he speaks of the whole church in common, as if he should say, It is not the wish of some one man alone, but the whole body of the church is of the same mind. For that he may the better win God to his purpose, he calls all the godly to him, as many as were at that time in the world, to support him in his suit. And doubtless it profits not a little to increase hope, when prayers are made by all men together, as it were in one

person, even as Paul notes in 2 Cor. i. 11. There is in the words a latent weight, for he terms the unsightly materials that remained of the ruins, *the stones of Sion*, to intimate not only that the faithful in old time were taken with the conspicuous splendour of the temple, since it was able not only to allure men's eyes, but also to ravish all their senses with admiration, but also that though the temple was overthrown, and there was nothing to be seen but hideous desolation, yet the faithful continued unalterably fixed in their attachment to it, and acknowledged God's glory in the crumbling stones and decayed rubbish. And surely, as the temple was built by God's appointment, and its restoration promised by the same God, it was reasonable that the affections of the godly should not be withdrawn from its ruins. In the meanwhile, lest the scorn of the heathen should discourage them, they were fain to look into God's word for some other thing than they saw with their eyes. For as they saw the place was hallowed to God, and that the temple should be built there again, although the stones lay mutilated and broken without order, and spoiled materials lay scattered here and there, yet do not the faithful shake off their reverence for the temple. The more sorrowful therefore is the desolation of the church, the less ought we to be alienated from the love of it. Yea rather, this pity ought to draw from us sighs and groans, and would God this lesson were not so applicable to our days as it is. For though God have his churches in some places, where there flourishes a purer worship of him, yet if we look upon the whole world, since God's word is everywhere trampled under foot, and his service defiled with innumerable abominations, assuredly his holy temple is everywhere rent with woeful decay, yea and even those little churches in which God dwelleth, are torn and scattered. And what are these huts in comparison of that gorgeous building which is described by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah? But no desolation must prevent us from loving the very stones and dust of the church. Let us leave the papists to exult in their altars, their huge buildings, and their other pomps, for all that heathenish gloriousness is but abomination before God and his angels, but the ruins of the true church are holy.

16 And the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

17 For the Lord hath builded up Sion, and is seen in his glory.

18 He hath had an eye to the prayer of the solitary, and hath not despised the prayer of them.

19 This shall be written to the generation that is to come; and the people that is created shall praise God.

16 *And the heathen, &c.*] The prophet sets forth the fruit of the deliverance, namely, that thereby God's glory shall be renowned among nations and kings. Wherein he gives a secret intimation, that when the church is oppressed God's glory is thrown down therewith; even as doubtless the ungodly scoffed at the God of Israel, as though he wanted power to succour his people. The prophet therefore says, that if God shall redeem his people, it will be such a notable display of his might as may compel the Gentiles to reverence him whom they now scoff at. For he says that God is seen in his glory, when he hath led his church out of the darkness of death; according as it is said of the first deliverance in another place, *Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion*: Psalm, cxiv. 2. So also, in this place, God, by gathering to him again his people that were scattered abroad, and by raising his church as it were from death, appeared in his glory. And it is no slender comfort, that God's love is so great towards us that he will have his glory shine forth in our welfare. Now, though God's mighty working were hidden from the faithful, when they were in the midst of affliction, yet they always beheld it with the eyes of faith, and in the mirror of his promises.

18 *He hath had an eye, &c.*] This is worthy to be noted, that the deliverance of the godly is ascribed to the prayers of the faithful. For though nothing but God's own mere mercy led him to deliver his church, according as he had freely promised to do it, yet to stir up the faithful to the love of praying, he asserts that he will grant to their entreaties what he was minded to do of his own accord. Neither are these two things repugnant to each other, that God preserveth his church of his own free mercy, and that in preserving it he is favourable to the suits of his servants. For as the prayers are linked with the free promises, the fervour of the former flows out of the latter. Now in saying that *the prayers of the solitary were heard*, he speaks not only of one man, for presently he will use the plural number. But he calls all the Jews *solitary*, as long as they were cast out of their country, and lived as exiles in a foreign land, because though Assyria and Chaldea were countries

singularly fruitful and pleasant, yet did they wander there as miserable exiles just as in the wilderness, as I have said heretofore. But as then the solitary people obtained favour by sighing, so also now, though the faithful are scattered, and have no regular meetings, yet will the Lord hear their sighings in this lonely dispersion if they breathe forth their prayers together for the restoration of the church, in one consent of unfeigned faith.

19 *This shall be written, &c.*] He advances the fruit of the deliverance still more, that he may encourage himself and all others to hope of obtaining. And by these words he intimates that this work of God's, the praise whereof is to be spread abroad unto many ages, shall be a notable one. For we know there are many things worthy of praise, the memorial whereof notwithstanding vanishes away. But the prophet puts a difference between the welfare of the church for which he makes suit, and ordinary benefits. By the word *write*, he means that the thing done is worthy to be registered in the public records, so that the remembrance of it may be conveyed to them that shall come after. And there lurks an apt antithesis between the new creation of the people, and their present ruin, which the interpreters improperly pass over. For when the people ceased to be, the church was after a sort extinguished. Doubtless the name of it might seem dead when the Jews, being mingled with heathen nations, formed no separate body. Therefore their return was as a second birth, and in that respect it is not amiss that the prophet looks for a new creation, because though the church had utterly perished, he was well assured in himself, that God by his wonderful power was able to bring it to pass, that it should rise up again with renewed life. And this is a very remarkable passage, that the church is not always preserved in suchwise as that it may appear to survive, but even when it seems dead is suddenly created anew, as often as it seemeth good to God. Let no desolation, therefore, bereave us of this hope, that like as God did once create the world out of nothing, so is it his own proper work to dig his church out of the darkness of death.

20 For he hath looked out from the high place of his holiness; the Lord hath looked down from heaven unto the earth;

21 To hear the groaning of the prisoner, to set loose the sons of death;

22 That the name of the Lord may be declared in Sion, and the praise of him in Jerusalem ;

23 When nations shall be gathered together, and kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

20 *For he hath, &c.*] Now the prophet embraces the deliverance which he anxiously sighs for, just as if it were accomplished already. And, lest the malignity of men might darken so great a benefit of God, he challenges to God his due praise openly and in express words, according also as the people were in many ways enforced to acknowledge God's hand. For long time before they were haled into captivity, they were forewarned of this calamity, that God's judgment might be witnessed. Therewith, also, was promised them the deliverance, and the time was set, even at the term of seventy years. Therefore man's unthankfulness could not imagine or surmise any other cause of their return than God's only goodness. And therefore he says *that God looked out of heaven*, lest the Jews should think themselves beholden to the grace and favour of Cyrus for their deliverance, which proceeded manifestly from heaven. *The high place of his holiness or sanctuary*, imports as much here as heaven. For as the temple in Ps. xxvi. 8, and lxxvi. 3, is called God's dwelling-place in respect of men, so also, lest we might conceive any earthly imagination of God, he assigneth himself a dwelling-place in heaven; not that he is shut up in heaven, but that we should seek him above the world. Afterwards, he repeats what he had glanced at concerning prayer, that he may again stir up the hearts of the faithful to praying, and, consequently, that when they shall have been delivered, they may perceive that it was granted them for their faith's sake, because they had sent up their sighs upon trust of his promises. And he terms them prisoners, because, though they were not bound in fetters, yet was their captivity equivalent to a most rigorous imprisonment. Nay, he says soon after, that *they were appointed to death*, that they might understand that it was all over with them, if they were not rescued from death by the extraordinary power of God.

22 *That the name, &c.*] Here is set forth a more ample and pregnant fruit of the deliverance than had been mentioned before, inasmuch as the Jews not only shall grow together in one to give thanks to God, but also shall be conveyed home into their country again, and gather kings and nations to them into the same unity of faith and worship of



God. But assuredly it was then a thing incredible, not only that God's praises should, within a while, sound again in the temple that was thrown down from its foundation, as they had done in time past, but also that people should repair thither from all quarters, and in serving God, company with the Jews, who at that time were as a putrid carcase. The prophet, to put the people in hope of return, uses this argument, namely, that it is impossible that the place which God hath chosen to himself should be left desolate for ever. But he tells them there shall be new matter for praising God, because the name of God shall be worshipped by all nations, and the church shall consist, not of one nation only, but of the whole world. Which we know has been fulfilled under the auspices of Christ, according also as it was avouched by the prophecy of holy Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10, *unto him shall the Gentiles gather*. But as it is a common thing with the prophets to continue the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon to the coming of Christ, the prophet does not lay hold of any one piece alone, but brings down the grace of God throughout to its proper consummation. And though it were not necessary that as many as should be converted to Christ should go up to Jerusalem, yet, according to the usual manner, he has put the law-worship as a symbol of true godliness. Nevertheless, we may learn by this place that God's name is never better glorified than when his religion is spread abroad, and when the church increases, which in the same respect is termed *the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified*; Is. lxi. 3.

24 He weakened my strength in the way, and shortened my days.

25 I said, My God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years endure from generation to generation.

26 Thou hast aforetime laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands.

27 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

28 But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

29 The children of thy servants shall dwell, and the seed of them shall stand fast before thee.



24 *He weakened my strength, &c.*] Unwisely, in my judgment, some restrain this text to the time when the Jews were put to trouble after that liberty was given them to return home. Rather there is a metaphor in the word *journey*, or *way*: for, seeing that the appearing of Christ was the goal of the ancient people's race, it is with good reason that they complain that they are weakened in the midst of their course. And so they charge God with his promise, that whereas they have not run heedlessly, but have followed his promise, they were bruised by his hand in the midst of their journey. Truly they do not expostulate with God as though he disappointed their hope, but as they are assured that he dealeth not guilefully with his servants, by this complaint they encourage themselves to hope well. In the same sense they add that their days are cut off, or reduced to a narrow span, because they have an eye to the fulness of time, which always continued unaccomplished till Christ was revealed, and therefore there follows, *cut me not off in the midst of my days*. For they compare the intermediate space until the time that Christ should have appeared to the *midst of a life*, because the ripe age of the church was then accomplished when Christ was come, as I have said before. For though the calamity was foretold them, yet the nature of the covenant required that God should defend and maintain that people under his hand; and therefore the captivity was as it were a violent breaking off, in which respect the godly required with the more earnestness that they might not be cut off in the midst of their journey. For they did not by this means figure to themselves a certain term of life, but as God, adopting them freely, had given them a beginning of life, with this condition, that he would cherish them even to the coming of Christ, it was lawful for them to allege this promise, as if they should say, Lord, thou hast promised us life, not for two or three days, or for a month, or for a few years, but even till thou shouldst renew the whole world, and gather all nations together under the hand of thy Christ. What means he then by *cutting off in the midst of the race*? The reason that follows seems to make nothing to the present case. For though God be everlasting, does it therefore follow that men shall be everlasting too? But in Psalm xc. 2, I have declared in what manner God's everlastingness may seasonably be called to witness, when the grounds of the confidence of salvation are debated. For God will be known to be everlasting not only in his secret being, but also in his word, according as it is written in Isaiah, xl. 6; *All flesh is grass, and all the beauty of it is as the flower of grass; but the word of the Lord endureth*

*for ever.* Now as God knitteth us to himself by his word, how much soever our frail state be distant from his heavenly glory, yet must our faith pierce through to that blessed state, from which God casteth an eye on our miseries. Still the comparison between the everlasting life of God and the short race of man's life, has reference to another point also; God is moved to mercy in this respect also, because he seeth that men pass away as it were in a moment, and soon vanish, according as it is shewn more at large soon after.

26 *Thou hast aforetime, &c.*] He amplifies what he had said before, namely, that all the world in comparison of God is but a vanishing form; and yet a little after he exempts the church from this common lot, because it is founded upon God's word, and shielded with the defence of the same. There are therefore two points; the one, that since the very heavens do in a manner differ nothing from smoke, the frailness of mankind must needs be such as to provoke God to mercy; and the other point is, that howsoever there be no stability in the heaven and the earth, yet shall the welfare of the church stand steadfast for ever, because it is upheld by God's everlasting truth. In the first member the faithful are taught, when they come forth into God's presence, humbly to consider how unstable and transitory their state is, lest they bring anything else with them than their own emptiness. For the first step to the winning of God's grace is this abasing of ourselves, according also as God avoucheth that our miseries move him to be merciful to us. The comparison of the heavens here comes in well: for how great is the continuance of them in respect of our life, which passes, or rather flies away so swiftly? How many ages of men have passed away since the heavens have held still their nature in their unceasing motion? Again, their beautifully ordered and excellent frame cries out that they are the work of God's hands. Yet shall neither the long continuance, nor the beauteous garniture of the heavens, exempt them from destruction. What then shall become of us wretched men, who die before we are scarce born, for there is no particle of our life which does not verge rapidly towards death. Nevertheless, the interpreters expound not the perishing of the heavens in one and the same way. Some understand it simply of the changing of them, which will be a sort of destruction: for, though they shall not be brought to nought, yet the very alteration of their nature, as I may term it, shall destroy that which is mortal and corruptible, so that they shall begin to be other heavens, and new heavens. According to others, a condition is to be supplied, if it so please God, because they deem it an ab-

surdity that the heavens should be subject to corruption. But, first, there is no necessity to call in that expression, which rather involves the sense than clears it. Again, they do amiss to attribute immortality to the heavens, since Paul affirms that they, as well as the earth and other creatures, groan and travail till the day of redemption; Rom. viii. 22; because they are subject to corruption, not of their own accord, or nature, but because man, in casting himself down, has drawn all the world into a participation of the same ruin. Two things, therefore, are to be considered; that the heavens are indeed subject to corruption by reason of man's fall, and also that they shall be so renewed, that the prophet justly says that they shall perish, because they shall be other, and not the same. The effect is, that whithersoever we turn our eyes, despair encounters us everywhere till we come to God. For what is there in us but rottenness? and what else are we ourselves but a mirror of death? Moreover, what else is the changeableness of the whole world, but a certain presage, nay prelude, of destruction? If the whole fabric of the world haste towards its end, what shall become of mankind? If all nations shall perish, what stability shall there be in men severally? Therefore stability is nowhere to be sought but in God alone.

29 *The children of, &c.*] By these words the prophet gives us to understand that he seeks the preservation of the church, not because it is a part of mankind, but because God hath raised it above the revolutions of the world. And surely the condition upon which he hath adopted us is to cherish us in his own bosom. Wherefore the inference is not far-fetched, that among the innumerable storms, each of which were able to carry us away, the prophet hopes for the steady continuance of the church. For though through our own fault we are estranged from God, and therewith as it were cut off from the wellspring of life, yet, as soon as we are reconciled to God, he beginneth to flow down upon us again. Whence it follows, that the faithful, as they are begotten again of incorruptible seed, shall survive death, because God continueth always the same. For by the word *dwell*, he denotes an assured and everlasting heritage. And he says, *before the face of God*, because the welfare of the godly is assured, not after the manner of the world, or the common fashion of the heaven and earth, but by reason of the holy conjunction which is between them and God. By the *seed and children of the godly*, he means not any of their issue without exception, (for many that are born of the flesh degenerate,) but such as swerve not from the faith of their parents. And the succession is marked expressly be-

cause the covenant is extended to the ages to come, as we shall see again in the next Psalm. Now if we keep steadfastly the treasure of life committed to our custody, let us not doubt, though innumerable deaths hem us in on all sides, to cast the anchor of our faith in heaven, that the stability of our welfare may rest in God.

## PSALM CIII.

*In this Psalm each of the godly is taught to give thanks to God on his own part individually, and afterwards for the common grace which he hath vouchsafed to the elect, by making the covenant of salvation with them in his law, thereby to make them partakers of his adoption. But chiefly he commends the mercy with which God upholdeth and beareth with his people, though worthy of severe punishments; and that not in respect of their desert or worthiness, but because he compassionateth their frailty. At length the Psalm closes with a general ascription of praise.*

[*David's.*]

1 My soul, bless thou the Lord; and all my inwards, his holy name.

2 My soul, praise thou the Lord, and forget none of his benefits:

3 Which is merciful to all thy sins; which healeth all thine infirmities;

4 Which rescueth thy life from the grave; which crowneth thee with mercy and compassions;

5 Which satisfieth thy jaws with good: thy youth shall be renewed as the eagles.

1 *My soul, bless thou, &c.*] The prophet, in urging himself to thankfulness, teaches by his own example what every man ought to do. And doubtless our slothfulness has need of continual incitements in this behalf. Nay, if the very prophet himself, who was fired with a singular zeal above others, was not free from this malady of slothfulness, even as he confesses by applying incentives to himself, how much more is this medicine needful for us who are too well assured of our own torpor! The Holy Ghost, therefore, by the mouth of the prophet, obliquely taunteth us that we are not more diligent in praising God, and therewith sheweth the remedy, that every man descending into himself may correct his own sluggishness. For being not content with the name of *soul*, (by which undoubtedly he signifies the seat of the

understanding and affections,) he adds also expressly his *inward parts* as it were speaking to his mind and heart, and to all the powers of both. Now he that speaks so to himself, does as it were commune with himself before God, apart from all witnesses. And the repetition is emphatic, as if he reproved his own slowness.

2 *Forget not, &c.*] By this portion he admonishes us that God is not behindhand for his part, in ministering abundant matter for praising him, were it not that our own unthankfulness checked us. And first of all he teaches that he dealeth so bountifully with us in order that his name should be praised by us; but yet by the way he lashes our inconstancy, which hurries us away to anything else in preference. For how comes it to pass that we are so benumbed in this the chief exercise of godliness, but because our foul and wicked forgetfulness buries in our hearts the infinite benefits of God, which appear openly both to heaven and earth. For were we sufficiently mindful of them, the prophet tells us we should be forward enough to do our duty, seeing he does but forbid us to forget them.

3 *Which is merciful, &c.*] Now he enumerates the benefits severally, in considering which he told us we were too forgetful and negligent. And it is not for nought that he begins at this point, that God forgiveth our sins, because free atonement is the fountain from whence all the residue spring. For though God's gracious goodness extend itself even unto the wicked, yet does it so little profit them, that they do not so much as taste it. Therefore, of all benefits whereof the true and substantial fruition comes to us, the first is this, that God, freely forgiving and wiping away our sins, receiveth us into his favour; yea truly, the forgiveness of sins, inasmuch as it purchases us atonement with God, does also therewith sanctify whatsoever good things he bestoweth upon us, so that they turn to our welfare. The second member is either a repetition of the same sentence, or else it has a larger scope. For the fruits of free forgiveness are these; that God, governing us with his Spirit, mortifieth the lusts of the flesh, and cleanseth us from vices, and restoreth to us the true soundness of godly and upright conversation. As for those who understand *our infirmities to be healed by God*, because when he hath remitted our sins he also therewith riddeth us of bodily diseases, they seem to restrain the prophet's meaning in too jejune a manner. Wherefore I doubt not but the medicine whereof the prophet speaks, pertains to the blotting out of guilt, and consequently to the healing of the vices that are inherent in us, which is done by the spirit of regeneration. If any one will add a third thing,

namely, that when God is at one with us he also remitteth our punishments, I will not gainsay it. Meanwhile, we may learn by this passage that till the heavenly physician help us, we foster within us not only many diseases but also many deaths.

4 *Which redeemeth, &c.*] He expresses more plainly of what sort our state is before God remedy our maladies; namely, that we are but dead men, and doomed to the sepulchre. So much the more then does it become us to value God's mercy, because it is our deliverance from death and damnation. For if the rising again from the grave be the beginning of spiritual life, what is there then left for men to please themselves in? Afterwards the prophet avouches that God's incomparable grace shines forth as well in the very beginning of salvation as also in the whole progress of it. To amplify the commendation of which grace, he adds also *compassions* in the plural number. And he says we are *crowned* with them; as if he should say, before, behind, on either side, above, and beneath, the immeasurable abundance of God's grace is with us, so that there is no place void of it. The same thing he amplifies afterwards, in saying, *our jaws are satisfied*; in which metaphor he alludes to the unrestrained feasting, where there is more abundant store of meats. For they that have but thin fare, dare scarcely taste of the meat. Not that he approves of ravenousness in devouring God's benefits over-greedily, as men commonly indulge themselves intemperately when they have a more than ordinary supply; but he took his form of expression from the common custom of men, thereby to teach us that what good things soever our heart can wish, flow to us from God's bounty, even to perfect satiety. They that take *ty* for *decking*, mar this passage with their invention, and I marvel how so absurd a notion came into their minds, save that it usually happens to all who are over curious that in exercising their inventions they bring forth mere puerilities. Afterwards he adds that new courage is instilled into him by God, so that he continues always sound: like as Isaiah, lxxv. 20, treating of the restitution of the church, says that a man of an hundred years old shall be like a child. And by this manner of speaking, he denotes that together with plentiful abundance of all good things, God giveth him also inward vigour, that he may enjoy them merely, as if his strength should continually renew itself. The comparison of the eagle gave the Jews occasion to forge fables. For they understand not the elements of any science at all: they are so brazen-faced that what matter soever is treated of, they stick at nothing, and as soon as they meet with any-



thing not understood, there is not any forgery so rank which they obtrude not upon men as an oracle from God. So in this place they surmise that every tenth year the eagles mount up to the elemental fire, and afterwards plunge themselves in the sea, and that presently a succession of new feathers comes upon them again. But the plain meaning of the prophet is elicited from the nature of the eagle described by philosophers, and which is thoroughly known by experience. For that bird is always lusty and strong, even to her old age, and is not enfeebled by years nor subject to diseases till at length it dies of hunger. Certain it is that it is long-lived; but at length its beak grows over so that it cannot receive meat, but only is fain to suck in blood, or else to refresh itself with drinking. Whence came the proverb, *an eagle's old age*, for necessity makes them tipplers. And because drink alone is not enough to maintain life, they rather pine away for hunger and want of food, than decay for defect of strength. Now, without any fable, we perceive the natural meaning of the prophet; that as eagles continue always lusty, so that they are youthful even in their old age, even so the godly are sustained by the secret power of God, so that they retain their strength still unimpaired. And though they are not always full of vigour in this life, but rather drag on a painful existence in continual faintness, yet what is here spoken truly applies to them after their own manner. Truly this is a thing that touches all; namely, that being brought out of the grave, they feel that God is bountiful to them in innumerable ways. And surely, if all men consider how much they are in his debt, they might well say that *their mouth is filled with good things*, like as in Psalm cxxxix. 18, David confesses himself unable to number them, because *they are more than the sands of the sea*. And were it not that our own churlishness obstructs our understandings, we should see that even in dearth we are so fed when we are famished, as that always God bringeth forth the manifold riches of his goodness. With regard to vigour, it is to be taken thus; that as while our outward man decays, we are renewed to a better life, there is no cause why we should be grieved at the decay of our strength, especially seeing he sustaineth our feeble and fainting souls with his Spirit.

6 The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment to all that are oppressed.

7 He opened his ways unto Moses, and his works unto the children of Israel.

8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of much mercy.

6 *The Lord executeth, &c.*] After David has recounted the benefits of God towards himself, from this personal consideration he mounts up higher. And yet no doubt when he declares that God succoureth the oppressed, he makes himself one of the same number, according as he had felt his help in many persecutions before; and by his own experience he describes in what character God is wont to shew himself towards all such as are wrongfully afflicted. But as the faithful in this world are evermore living among wolves, he commends diverse deliverances in the plural number, that we should know that it is God's ordinary office to rescue his servants as often as he seeth any wrong offered them. For hereby are we instructed to patience, when God taketh upon him the revenging of our wrongs, and fenceth us with the shield of his justice, or defendeth us with the sword of his judgment whenever we are assaulted wrongfully.

7 *He hath opened, &c.*] Now David takes upon him the person of the chosen people; and truly in good season, 'as being put in mind of it by the benefits bestowed upon him, because he was persuaded that he was not enriched with so many good things in any other respect than that he was a member of the church, he soon carried back his thoughts to the common covenant. I grant, he continues the same sentence; for these *ways* which he says were shewn unto Moses, were but the deliverance of the people, until they entered into the land of promise. And he chose this as a signal specimen above all others, of God's justice and judgment, thereby to prove that God is evermore a righteous helper of those that are oppressed. But as this depended upon the promise, there is no doubt but he had an eye especially to it; as if he should say that God's justice was plainly proved and manifested to his chosen people whom he had adopted, and with whom he had made his covenant. And he is said to have manifested his ways, first to Moses, who was his servant and messenger, and afterwards to all the people. For Moses himself is endued with a character set upon him by God, because it was God's will to be made known to the people by the hand and by the working of him. The *ways* then, and the *works of God*, are his rising up with wonderful power to deliver the people, his leading them through the Red sea, and his avouching his presence by many signs and miracles. But as all these flowed from the free covenant, David exhorts himself and others to yield



thanks to God, for choosing them to be his peculiar people, and for enlightening their hearts by the doctrine of the law; because, as nothing is more miserable than man without the knowledge of God, so is it an incomparable treasure of perfect felicity, that God is come down to us with a record of his fatherly love towards us.

8 *The Lord is full, &c.*] David seems to allude to the exclamation of Moses which is read in Exod. xxxiv. 6, where God's nature is more clearly described than anywhere else, in respect of the notable manner of the revelation. For at what time it was granted Moses to see God's glory somewhat nearly, at the appearing thereof in his sight he burst out into these words, *O God, merciful and full of compassion and pity, slow to wrath, and great in goodness.* Forasmuch, therefore, as in that place he has briefly comprehended what is profitable for us to know concerning God himself, David wisely applies the said titles to the present purpose. For his design is to attribute it to the unqualified goodness of God, that the people who through their own faults had from time to time fallen away from the grace of adoption, do nevertheless keep still their state. Howbeit, in general it must be understood, that the true knowledge of God should always be referred to the experience of faith; because God will not be sought out in his secret essence, but in suchwise as he exhibiteth himself to us; which is a point worthy to be marked. For as often as mention is made of God, we see men's minds perversely rush into cold speculations, and catch hold of things that are of no profit; meanwhile, neglecting the attributes that meet our eyes wherein a lively image of him is reflected. But to whatsoever men apply their study, they will nowhere find better profit than in meditation on his wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and mercy: especially, the knowledge of his goodness serves well, both to the edifying of our faith, and the illustration of his praises. And therefore Paul, Eph. iii. 18, affirms that our height, length, breadth, and depth, is to know the unspeakable riches of grace that are opened to us in Christ. This also is the reason why David commends God's mercy with many words, as Moses did before him: for first, there is no worse fault in us than that devilish overweening which robs God of his due praise, and is so deeply rooted in us, that it cannot easily be plucked up. God therefore riseth up, and that he may unhouse the impious confidence of the flesh, he maintaineth in lofty terms his own mercy, in which alone we stand. Again; whereas it would become us to settle ourselves in God's grace, our minds do either tremble or waver, and nothing is harder for us to do than to

acknowledge that God is merciful unto us. Wherefore against this misgiving, David, after the example of Moses, has set these synonymous terms; first, that God is merciful, and secondly, gracious, and thirdly, a gentle and meek bearer with men's sins, and lastly, of much compassion and goodness.

9 He will not be always pleading; nor keep *anger* for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For according to the highness of the heavens above the earth, so hath his goodness prevailed upon them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our sins from us.

9 *He will not, &c.*] David, from the former titles of God, gathers a consequence, that God, when he is displeased, will nevertheless be easy to be entreated, because he is of his own nature always inclined to forgive. And it was needful to make this addition, for our sins would shut the gate against his goodness unless a method of appeasing him presented itself. And David gives an inkling that God commenceth an action against sinners, to humble them with the feeling of their guilt; but that he by and by letteth it fall, as soon as he seeth them subdued and brought low. After another sort, in Gen. vi. 3, he saith, *My Spirit shall not plead with man any more*, and that because convicted of their evil deeds, and their condemnation was ripe. But in this place David says he will not be always pleading, because such is his easiness to be entreated, and his facility to pardon, he pursueth not his right. And hereto pertains the second word, which corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me l'a gardé*, when there is purposed a secret revenge which is fostered in the heart of him that cannot forgive injuries, but waits for occasion to do a displeasure. But David denies that God beareth malice after the manner of men, because he stoopeth to reconciliation of his own mere motion. Still we must know that this applies not to all mankind without exception, but is the privilege of the church. For Moses in express words, Deut. v. 9, calls God *a terrible avenger, who casteth the sins of the fathers into the bosom of the children*. But David, passing over the unbelievers, upon whom rests the everlasting and inappeasable wrath of God, shews how tenderly he beareth with his own children, even as God himself speaketh in Isaiah, liv. 8,

*I have chastised thee for a moment, but I will follow thee with everlasting compassion.* Afterwards he proves what he had spoken by experience, or by the effect, because the Israelites had not continued safe unto that hour, but by the wonderful forbearance of God; as if he should say, Let each of us examine his own life; in how many ways we have provoked God's displeasure? Yea, we have provoked it continually, and yet hath he not only forborne punishment, but also tenderly cherisheth us, whom he might justly destroy.

11 *For according to, &c.*] He maintains by a similitude that God punisheth not the faithful as they have deserved, but striveth against their misdeeds with his loving-kindness. Moreover, the expression imports as much as if he should say, God's mercy towards us is immeasurable. As for the word רַחֵם, whether you take it neutrally or transitively, it makes little difference, because either way the immeasurableness of God's mercy is compared to the amplitude of the world. And as there would be no way for God's mercy to come to us, unless the impediment of our guilt were taken away, he adds immediately that God driveth away our sins as far from us as the east is distant from the west. The effect is, that God's mercy is poured out upon the faithful, far and wide, as the world is; and lest anything might hinder the course of it, their sins are utterly blotted out. And he confirms what I said just now; namely, that he treats not generally what is God's dealing towards the whole world, but in what character he sheweth himself to the faithful. Whereby also it appears that he does not here treat of the mercy by which he reconcileth us to himself at the first, but of that mercy with which he continually plieth those whom he hath once embraced with his fatherly love. For there is one species of mercy by which he restoreth us from death to life while we are yet strangers to him, and there is another by which he upholdeth and maintaineth us in that state, because the former would vanish away if he did not establish it by daily forgiveness. Whence also we gather how grossly the papists trifle, while they feign that the free remission of sins is given but once only, and that afterwards righteousness is gotten, or the possession of it is held still by desert of works; and finally, that whatsoever guilt is contracted, is redeemed by satisfactions. But we see here that the mercy of God, whereby he reconcileth us to himself in not laying our sins to our charge, is not confined by David within a moment of time, but is extended even to the end of our life. No less effectually also does this place confute those fanatics that bewitch themselves and others with the

brainsick opinion of perfect righteousness, so that they need not forgiveness any more.

13 Like as the father pitieth his own children, so hath the Lord been pitiful towards them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth whereof we be made; he remembered that we are but dust.

15 The days of man are as grass; as a flower of the field, so flourisheth he.

16 As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

13 *Like as the father, &c.*] He not only explains by a similitude what he has spoken, but also therewith assigns the cause why God doth so lovingly bear with us, that is, because he is our father. Therefore it is the free adoption that maketh God continually to bear with our sins, and therefore the hope of forgiveness must be fetched out of that fountain. Now as no man has been adopted for his own deserving, it follows that sins are forgiven freely. And we know that God is compared with earthly fathers, not because he is like them, but because his incomparable love towards us cannot be expressed otherwise. Furthermore, lest God's fatherly forbearing might be perverted to a license of sinning, David repeats that he is not so favourable, but to such as worship him unfeignedly. Surely it is a mark of no ordinary forbearance that he maketh his sun to arise upon the good and the bad; Matt. v. 45. But in this place he treats of the free imputation of the righteousness whereby we are accounted children of God. But the same righteousness is not offered to any other than such as yield themselves wholly to so bountiful a father, and submit themselves reverently to his word. But as all zeal of godliness, of whatsoever sort it is, comes far short of perfection, it remains that the one only pillar of salvation is in the goodness of God.

14 *For he knoweth, &c.*] Here David, bringing to nought whatsoever of desert men challenge to themselves, avouches that it is only the consideration of our misery that provokes God to bear with us so gently. Which is to be marked advisedly again, not only to subdue the pride of the flesh, but also that our unworthiness delay not, or hinder not our faith. For the more wretched and despicable our state is, so much the forwarder is God to shew mercy, since indeed to do us good he is content even with our clay and dust.

To the same purpose pertains also the similitude that follows immediately after, that is, that all the bravery of man withers away no less than the beauty of a fading flower at one blast of the wind. Indeed it is improperly said that man flourishes. But as it may be objected that he nevertheless excels in some grace or other, David by way of concession says he flourishes as a herb, rather than flatly pronounces him a vapour, or a shadow, or a thing of nought, as he might have justly done. For though as long as we live in this world, we are garnished with natural gifts, and, to pass over the rest, *have our being and moving in God*, Acts xvii. 28, yet as we have nothing but upon sufferance, and such as may be taken from us every hour, it is but a shew or phantom, that passes away. Properly he treats here of the shortness of life, whereof God hath regard in bearing with us mercifully, according as is said in another place; *He remembereth that they are but flesh, a breath that passeth and returneth not again*, Ps. lxxviii. 39. If any man demand, wherefore David, omitting all mention of the soul, which nevertheless is the better part of man, pronounces us to be but dust and clay, I answer, It is enough for God to cause him to bear with us mercifully, when he seeth that nothing is more frail than our life. And though the soul remain alive after it has departed out of the prison of this body, yet has it no support in itself. It was created to give life to the body, and yet is it endued with no more life than God breatheth into it. But if God withdraw his grace from it, the soul will be but a blast, no less than the body is dust; and doubtless there will be found in the whole man nothing but mere vanity.

17 But the goodness of the Lord is for ever and ever upon them that fear him, and his righteousness upon their children ;

18 Unto them that keep his covenant, and are mindful of his commandments to do them.

17 *But the goodness, &c.*] The only thing that he leaves to men, is to have their being in the mercy of God, because they would be more than fools in seeking support in themselves. And after he has divested men of everything, he ministers to them a seasonable comfort ; namely, that though there be no inward power in them which vanishes not into smoke, yet is God an inexhaustible fountain of life, to relieve their drought. This antithesis must be noted ; for whom does he strip of all power ? even the faithful, who are born anew of God's Spirit, and worship him with un-

feigned devotion; and yet he leaves them nothing whereon their hope may rest, save the only goodness of God. However, as God's goodness is everlasting, the infirmity of the faithful is no hindrance to them, but that they may boast of everlasting salvation, even to the end, yea and in death itself. For David confines not their hope within any other bounds of time than he applies to God's grace, whereupon their hope is grounded. To *goodness* he annexes *righteousness*, by which word I have told you often that God's defence is denoted, by which he maintaineth and preserveth those that are his. God then is righteous, not because he rewardeth every man according as he deserves, but because he dealeth faithfully with his servants in shielding them with his hand. And the prophet has wisely set this righteousness in the lower degree, as the effect of goodness. Also he says that the same shall be spread forth upon their children, and children's children, according to this text of Deuteronomy, vii. 9, *God sheweth mercy to a thousand generations*. And undoubtedly it is a singular proof of love, that he not only receiveth the persons individually into his favour, but also admitteth their offspring into the same fellowship, as it were by right of inheritance, that they may be copartners of the same adoption. For how should he cast us away, who, by receiving our children and children's children into his protection, sheweth in the persons of them what great account he maketh of our welfare? But as nothing is more a matter of course than for hypocrites to beguile themselves with the false pretence of God's favour, or for degenerate children to draw wrongfully to themselves what was promised to their fathers, the aforesaid exception is set down again, namely, that God will be merciful to none but such as on their part observe his covenant, which the faithless make void by their own depravity. That the keeping or observing of the covenant is put for *the fear of God*, is worth remarking; because by this means David gives us to understand that none are the true worshippers of God but such as reverently obey his word. Very far from this are the papists, who, thinking themselves equal to the angels in holiness, yet shake off the yoke of God by trampling his holy word under their feet, as if they were a sort of rabid beasts. David, then, does rightly estimate men's godliness by this; that is, if they submit themselves to God's word, and follow the rule appointed by him. Because, however, the covenant takes its beginning from the commendation of grace, the lawful keeping of the same requires, before all things, faith and prayer. Neither is it superfluous that he adds, *who are mindful of his commandments*; for though God put us in mind continually,



yet do we soon glide away to worldly cares ; various avocations confuse us, and many enticements lull our senses to sleep : and so forgetfulness chokes the doctrine of light, unless the faithful stir up themselves from time to time. But David says that this mindfulness then flourishes, when men exercise themselves in action : for many whose feet are too slow, and whose hands are wellnigh dead, have tongues prompt enough to discourse.

19 The Lord hath established his throne in heaven ; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

20 Bless the Lord, ye angels of his, that are mighty in strength, which do his word, in hearing the voice of his word.

21 Bless the Lord, all ye hosts of his ; ye servants of his that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the Lord, all ye works of his, in all places of his dominion : O my soul, bless thou the Lord.

19 *The Lord hath established, &c.*] After David has rehearsed the benefits of God, wherewith he bindeth each of us to him, with which he plieth the whole church, now he extols his immeasurable glory in general. The effect is, that as often as mention is made of God, men should learn to mount above the whole world, because his majesty surpasses the heavens ; and also learn not to measure his power after the manner of man, because he containeth all kingdoms and dominions under him. And lest any man might think that only earthly creatures were commanded to obedience, he specially addresses the very angels. Moreover, by calling them to participate in praising God, he warns himself and all the godly, that nothing is better, or more to be wished, than to praise God, since there is not any exercise more excellent for the angels to occupy themselves in. Doubtless the angels are more willing and prompt to this office than to want incitement from us : with what face then dare we, whose slothfulness is so great, take upon us the part of exhorting them ? But though the angels run swiftly before, and we come with difficulty lagging after, yet David enjoins them to sing God's praises for our sake, that he may awaken us from our drowsiness by their example. By the way, we must mark his purpose, which I have touched upon before, that is, that he directs his discourse to the angels that we should know that the grand object, and no other, which they have in view, is to advance the glory of God. Therefore on the one side he decks them with strength, and yet he adds

immediately that they depend wholly upon God's beck; *you*, says he, *which do his word*; as if he should say, how great soever the power they are endued with, nothing is more honourable to them than their obeying God. And he not only says that the angels execute God's commandments, but also, the better to express the willingness of their obedience, he says they are always ready to go about his behests.

21 *All ye hosts of his, &c.*] By this expression he denotes not the stars, as some suppose, but he continues his former proposition. Still the repetition is not superfluous, because by *hosts* he denotes the millions of millions, which standing about God's throne, catch every intimation of his pleasure. And again, he calls them his *servants which do his pleasure*, that we may know they are not fixed in idle speculation of God's glory, but as they are appointed to be our ministers and guardians, they are ready for work. Instead of the term *word*, he puts now the term *pleasure*, both wisely and with very good reason. For though the sun and the moon and the stars keep the laws that God hath appointed them, yet as they want understanding, they are not properly said to obey his word and his voice. Indeed the word *obey* is sometimes transferred to speechless creatures, but it is metaphorically that they are said to hearken to God's voice; namely, when by the secret instinct of nature they obey his decrees; but it is peculiarly applicable to the angels, whose purpose it is to obey God, according also as they understand from his holy mouth, what his will is. And the word *pleasure* more clearly expresses a glad and cheerful obedience; as if he had said that the angels not only are obedient to God's commandments, but also receive his commissions willingly, and with exceeding great delight, that they may execute his pleasure; for so the Hebrew word imports, as I have said before.

22 *All his works, &c.*] At length he turns himself to all creatures; because though they want speech and understanding, yet must they after a sort re-echo the praises of God. And this does he for our sakes, to teach us that there is no corner of heaven or earth void of God's praises. For there is less apology left us, when all the works of God by praising their Maker upbraid us with apathy, if at least we follow not their example. And he seems to put *all places of his dominion* expressly, that the faithful should employ their labour the more earnestly thereunto. For if in setting forth God's praises, not even those countries ought to be mute where no voice of his is heard, how shall it be lawful for us to keep silence, to whom God openeth his mouth, preventing us with his own holy voice? Finally,



David shews to what end he reckoned up God's benefits, and magnified his sovereignty; namely, to inspirit himself the more to praise him.

### PSALM CIV.

*This Psalm differs from the last: for neither does it treat of the special benefits of God which remain in his church, nor does it lift us up to the hope of the heavenly life; but portraying to us a lively image of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in the workmanship of the world, exhorts us to praise him, in so far as he sheweth himself a father towards us in this frail life.*

1 My soul, bless thou the Lord. O Lord my God, thou art become exceeding great; thou hast clothed thee with praise and glory.

2 Clothing himself with light as with a garment; and spreading out the heavens as a curtain:

3 Laying the beams of his chambers in the waters: making the clouds his chariot; and walking upon the wings of the wind:

4 Making the winds his messengers; and his ministers a flaming fire:

1 *My soul, bless thou, &c.*] After he has incited himself to praise God, he adds that there is matter for it; indirectly condemning himself and others if they should bury in silence the praises of God, than which nothing ought to be better known or more celebrated. And in comparing *the light*, wherewith he says that God *is clad*, to a *garment*, he gives us to understand that though God is invisible, yet is his glory open to the view of all. If his essence be considered, undoubtedly he dwelleth in unapproachable light; but as he enlighteneth the whole world with his brightness, the same is as it were the garment in which he, who in himself is hidden from us, doth after a sort appear visible to us. And this doctrine is very profitable to be known. For if men essay to climb to the height of God, although they fly above the clouds, yet must they faint in the midst of their career: and truly they are foolish who seek God in his naked majesty. Wherefore, that we may enjoy the sight of him, let him come forth with his apparel; that is to say, let us turn our eyes to this most goodly fabrick of the world, in which it is his will to be seen by us, lest we be too curious in searching out his secret *being*. Seeing, then, that God

offereth himself to us clothed in light, there is no reason why they who skulk from the knowledge of him, should seek to cloke their apathy by supposing that he lieth hidden in profound darkness. And he terms heaven *a curtain*, not meaning that God hideth himself under it, but that he useth it for the decoration of his majesty ; as if he should say it is his royal pavilion.

3 *Laying the beams, &c.*] David expresses in more words what he had said briefly and figuratively of God's raiment. The general tendency of the passage is this, that men must not pierce above the heavens to seek God, because he meeteth us in the world, and setteth lively pictures everywhere before our eyes. Moreover, lest we might imagine that there is anything borrowed in him, as though anything were added to him by the creation of the world, it is to be borne in mind that he putteth on apparel for our sakes. Somewhat more hard seems the metaphor, that God *layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters* ; but it was the prophet's meaning to move us the more to wonder, from the incomprehensibleness of the thing. For except beams be sound and strong, they will not be able to bear the weight of an ordinary house. Therefore when God groundselleth his heavenly palace with the waters, who would not be astonished at so incredible a miracle? Now considering our dulness, such hyperbolical expressions are not superfluous, for they scarcely awaken us even to a slight apprehension of him. What is meant by *walking upon the wings of the wind*, appears better by the verse following, where he says that *the winds are God's messengers*. Behold how God rideth in the clouds, and is carried upon the wings of the wind, verily because he driveth the winds and clouds about at his pleasure, and sheweth the presence of his power, by conveying them hither and thither as swiftly as he listeth. And by these words he gives us to understand that the winds rise not blindly, nor lightnings flash by casual impulse ; but that God by his appointment ruleth and controlleth all the distemperature in the air. Of which doctrine there is a twofold fruit: for if at any time there rise, hurtful winds, so that the south wind infect the air, or the north wind sear the corn, overthrow not only trees, but houses, and other winds mar the fruits of the earth, we must tremble under these scourges of God. Again, if God assuage the excess of heat with some gentle wind, if he purge the foul air with the north wind, or if he moisten the dry ground with the south wind ; here we must think upon his goodness. Howbeit, as the apostle cites this place to the Hebrews, i. 7, and applies it to angels, both the Greek

and the Latin interpreters have almost by common consent thought that David speaks allegorically. So also because Paul, citing a place out of Psalm xix. 4, seemed to transfer to the apostles, what is spoken there concerning the heavens, the whole Psalm has been injudiciously warped to an allegory. Furthermore, it was not the apostle's purpose to shew simply what the prophet teaches in this place: but as God is set forth to us visibly, as it were in a glass, the apostle with good reason described the analogy between the obedience which the winds yield to God openly and after a sensible manner, and the obedience which he receiveth at the angels' hands. The effect is, that like as God useth the winds as messengers, directing them hither and thither, and laying them and raising them as often as he listeth, to shew his power by their service; so were the angels also created to execute God's behests. And truly we profit little in the contemplation of universal nature, unless with the eyes of faith we discern his spiritual glory, whereof an image is held out to us in the world.

5 He hath founded the earth upon their pillars: it shall not move for ever and ever.

6 He hath covered it with the deep as with a garment: the waters shall stand above the mountains.

7 At thy rebuke they shall flee away; at the voice of thy thunder shall they haste away.

8 The hills shall ascend, and the dales shall descend, to the place which thou hast set fast for them.

9 Thou hast set them a bound; they shall not pass it; they shall not return to cover the earth.

5 *He hath founded, &c.*] Here he sets forth God's glory in the stability of the earth. For how does it keep its place without moving, seeing it is suspended in the midst of the air, and is only pillared by the waters? I grant this is not without reason; because the earth, occupying the lowest room, as it is the centre of the world, naturally settles down there. But even in this contrivance shines forth the wonderful power of God. Again, If the waters hold the upper place, because they are lighter, why do they not, then, cover the whole earth round about? In this case, truly, the philosophers have nothing to answer, but that the order of nature was controlled by God's providence, that men might have a dwelling-place. For unless they grant that the waters are restrained by the determinate appointment of God, they betray not only their depravity and unthankfulness, but also

their ignorance, and are mere barbarians. Not unfitly therefore does the prophet reckon up among God's miracles, what we could never be made to believe, if experience did not prove it to be true. And excessively base are we, if we take not warning by this so assured proof, and learn thereby that nothing is steadfast in this world, further than as it is stayed by the hand of God. For the world has not its beginning from itself, and therefore the whole order of nature depends not upon anything else than the appointment of God; whereby each element is endued with its peculiar property. Neither does the prophet only exhort us to give thanks to God, but also strengthens us for the time to come, that we might not live fearfully and sorrowfully in the world, as we must of necessity have done if God had not testified that he had given men a sure abiding-place upon earth. And it is a singular benefit of his, that he will have men to dwell upon the earth with quiet minds, because he hath established it upon everlasting pillars. For though it happen often, that cities perish by earthquake, yet does the body of the earth continue still. Yea, whatsoever disturbances take place in it assure us the better that the earth might be swallowed up every moment, were it not stayed by the secret power of God.

6 *He hath covered it, &c.*] This may be taken two ways; either that now the sea covers the earth as it were a garment, or that at the beginning, before God had by his word gathered the waters together into a heap, the earth was covered with the deep. It seems, however, to square better with the prophet's words, that the sea is now the covering of the earth. For at the first creation, the deep was not so much a garment as a grave, because nothing is more unlike apparel, than was that wild waste and shapeless chaos. Here therefore, in my judgment, is lauded that wondrous arrangement, that whereas the deep is without form, yet it is the garment of the earth. Because the context seems to point another way, the interpreters rather incline to it; namely, that the earth was covered with the deep before the waters were separated from it. But this knot is easily untied, if, where the prophet says, *the waters shall stand above the mountains*, you resolve the future tense into the potential mood, which is common enough with the Hebrews. And I doubt not but that as soon as the prophet has said that the earth was clothed with waters, he adds immediately, in way of exposition, *the waters would stand above the hills, but that they flee away at thy rebuke*. For whence cometh it that the mountains shoot up, and the valleys sink down, but because the waters have bounds assigned them, so that they

cannot return to overwhelm the earth? Now we see that the text runs very well thus: that the sea, being a deep that strikes terror from its vastness, is nevertheless a beauteous garment to the earth. And the reason of the metaphor is, because the surface of the earth stands uncovered. And the prophet avouches that this happens not by chance. For unless God's providence withheld the waters, would they not forthwith rush forward to overwhelm the earth? what distinction of hills and dales would there remain? Not unadvisedly, then, does the prophet avouch it to come to pass by evident miracle, and not by nature, that there appears any part of the earth's surface. For if God should give the sea liberty to have full course, in a moment the waters would stand above the mountains. But now, because they flee from God's rebuke, they flow another way. And by *the rebuke of God, and the voice of his thunder*, he denotes the terrific command, whereby God represseth the violent raging of the sea. For though he hath ordained this regulation by his nod alone, and maintaineth it at this day, yet if we reflect how tumultuously the billows of the sea throw up their foam, it is not for nought that the prophet has said that it is kept in awe by the mighty command of God; like as in Jeremiah, v. 22, and in Job, xxviii. 25, God proudly vaunteth his power in this behalf. *The ascending of the hills, and the sinking down of the dales* are poetical figures, importing that if God should not enclose the deep within bounds, there would be no longer any distinction between the hills and the dales, because it would swallow up the whole earth. And this diversity contributes to the beauty of the earth. He says that there is a place set fast for the valleys; because there would be no firmness in the roots of mountains, but the deep would bear sway there, if God should not command that there should be hollow spaces there, as it were contrary to nature.

9 *Thou hast set them, &c.*] He amplifies more effectively the miracle which he had stated, from the immutability of the ordinance. Natural philosophers are compelled to grant, and it is one of their first principles, that as the water is round, and occupies the middle place between earth and air, heavenly providence is the cause that a dry portion of the earth rises above it, as a habitation for men. And of this seamen have an evident demonstration; nay, if even the most uninstructed and incapable would but open their eyes, they would see huge mountains of water in the sea far above the level of the land. Assuredly no mounds of earth nor barriers of iron could cause the firm stability seen in waters, which are in their nature fluid and unstable. And, as I said

just now, that earthquakes and openings of the earth, which destroy in some places, overturn not the state of the earth; so also is it to be understood of the sea, that though in some places it pass its bounds, yet does the ordinance stand fast, so that there continues room upon the earth for men to dwell in. The Baltic sea in our days inundated long tracts of land, and did much damage to the Flemings and other neighbouring people. But by this particular flood we are warned what would happen, if the prevention of God were taken away: for how comes it to pass that we were not all swallowed up together, but that God withheld that ruthless element by his word? The effect is, that though the waters might by their natural tendency cover the earth, yet shall it not come to pass, because, as the truth is eternal, so does the ordinance which God hath ratified by his word remain firm.

10 Sending out springs in the valleys, which shall walk among the hills.

11 All beasts of the field shall drink: the wild asses shall quench their thirst.

12 By them shall the fowls of the air dwell, out of the midst of the boughs shall they yield their voice.

13 Watering the mountains out of his chambers: out of the fruit of thy works shall the earth be sufficed.

14 Making grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man; to bring forth bread out of the earth.

15 And wine gladdeth the heart of man, to make his face shine with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart.

10 *Sending out, &c.*] He describes another example, as well of God's power as of his goodness; that he maketh wells to spring upon the mountains, which may run down through the midst of the valleys. For though the dryness of the ground be needful for us to dwell upon, yet if we had not water to drink, and the earth opened not her veins, all kinds of living creatures would cease to be. The prophet therefore commends this adjustment, that the earth, though dry, yet supplies us with water by its moisture. Others translate גחלים, *torrents*, or *rivers*; but what I have given is the more correct. In which sense also he adds immediately after, that *they run among the hills*, whereas it is scarce credible that fountains could



spring out of rocks and stony places. But here it is demanded wherefore the prophet should say that the beasts of the field quench their thirst, rather than men, for whose sakes the world was made. I doubt not but the prophet said so to amplify God's gracious goodness, in that he vouchsafeth to extend his care to the brute beasts, yea even to the *wild asses*, under which kind he designates all the beasts of the forest. And the prophet speaks of desert places advisedly, that each of us should afterwards compare with them the pleasanter parts of the earth, and such as are adorned with any degree of cultivation: for rivers run even through the waste solitudes, even there the wild beasts enjoy some blessing of God; neither is there any country so barren which has not trees growing here and there, where the songs of birds resound. Now since even in those rugged places there appear signs of the divine goodness and power, with what admiration ought we to regard that exuberant supply of various good things which is beheld in cultivated and kindly regions! Surely where not only one river descends, and grass grows to feed wild animals, and the notes of birds are heard from scattered trees, but a manifold abundance and diversity of good things force themselves upon our view on all hands, our dulness is more than brutish if our minds are not proportionately fixed in pious meditation on the glory of God. He pursues the same sentiment still, when he says that God watereth the mountains out of his chambers: for it is no ordinary miracle, that the mountains, which seem to be condemned to perpetual drought, and after a sort are suspended in the air, nevertheless abound in pastures. Therefore the prophet justly concludes that this fruitfulness proceeds not from any other cause than that God is the secret cultivator of them. Improperly indeed does he attribute labour to God, but not without reason, because God, blessing the earth from his resting-place, worketh more effectually than if all the men in the world should kill themselves with incessant labour.

14 *Making grass, &c.*] Now comes he down to men, to whom, as his children, God vouchsafeth peculiar attention. Therefore after he has spoken of brute beasts, he says that corn is brought forth, and bread made thereof to feed men with; and not that only, but also oil and wine are added, which two pertain not only to necessity, but also to mirth. Many understand the word לעבודת of the labour that men bestow in husbandry. But as grass grows on mountains of its own accord, and without man's labour, it is well known that corn and herbs that are sown require the travail and sweat of men. Therefore according to them the meaning would be,

that God blesseth the obedience of men which they render in tilling the ground : but as this refinement is too forced, the word will be more correctly understood of *service*, in the ordinary sense of the term. If any man like to take the word *bread* restrictively, I will not oppose it : nevertheless it is likely that in the same are comprehended all other meats also : only I dislike the opinion of those that exclude bread. And the reason they allege is weak, which is, that soon after there is added another use of bread, namely, that it strengthens the heart of man : for in that place the same thing is but expressed in another way : and the prophet's meaning is, that God bringeth forth herbs for men to feed on, not only because the earth yields them sustenance in corn, but also in herbs and other fruits : for we are fed with more than one kind of food.

15 *Wine gladdeth, &c.*] In these words he gives us to understand, that God not only provideth for men's necessity, and bestoweth as much as suffices for the ordinary uses of life, but of his loving-kindness dealeth more bountifully with them, in gladdening their hearts with wine and oil. For certainly, nature would be satisfied with water to drink, therefore the addition of wine is owing to God's overflowing bounty. His expression that *their faces are made to shine with oil*, is variously expounded : for as sadness clouds the countenance, some understand it that men shine with cheerfulness when they enjoy the luxury of wine and oil : some with more subtlety refer it to *lamps*, without any good ground : others take the letter *D* in the way of comparison, as if it had been said, men's faces shine more with wine than if they were anointed with oil. But I indeed have no doubt the prophet speaks of unguents : for his meaning is this ; that God not only bestoweth upon men what is sufficient for their frugal use, but also proceedeth further by indulging them in luxuries. And as for the last member, where he says that *bread strengtheneth man's heart*, I take it thus : bread were sufficient to sustain men's life, but God giveth them wine and oil by way of overplus, as they say. The repetition of the use of bread, therefore, is not superfluous, but it is employed for the commendation of God's goodness, in that he bringeth men up tenderly and daintily, as a most kindhearted father does his children. Therefore he says again, Seeing that God sheweth himself a sufficiently loving fosterfather in bread alone, he is doubly and trebly bountiful in giving dainties also. However, as there is nothing to which we are more prone than to abuse God's liberality to excess, the more bountiful God is towards men, the more must they beware that through their misusage they mar not the abund-



ance which is offered them. Therefore not without cause does Paul, Rom. xiii. 14, forbid men to be careful for the flesh after the lusts thereof: for there will be no limit if we give the flesh its full desire. And certainly, as God doth lovingly indulge us, so also hath he set a law of temperance, that each man should of his own accord restrain himself in his abundance. He sendeth out oxen and asses into pastures, and they are content with what is sufficient for them: but to us he giveth more than we have need of, and therewith prescribeth a certain limit in the enjoyment of it, lest we should devour his benefits over greedily: and he testeth our moderation by a more than necessary supply. And this is the proper rule of using it, that our food should sustain, but not oppress us. Also the mutual communication of them, which is commanded by God, is the best preventive of intemperance; for rich men have their abundance upon condition that they should relieve the wants of their brethren. Certainly, as the prophet does not here mention the excesses of men in conjunction with God's providence, we gather from his words that men may use wine not only for necessary purposes, but also to make them merry; but this mirth must be restrained within the bounds of sobriety, that men do not forget themselves, and drown their wits and choke their energies, but rejoice before their God as Moses enjoins them, Levit. xxiii. 40, and cheer up themselves with thankfulness, so that they may become more prompt in obeying God. He that rejoices in thiswise will also be ready to suffer heaviness as often as it shall please God. For we must hold to that rule of Paul, Phil. iv. 12, *I have learned to abound, I have learned to suffer scarcity*. For if there come any token of God's wrath, even he that swims in all abundance of dainty fare will be spare in his diet, because he will understand that he is called to sackcloth and ashes. Much more, then, is he forbidden delights, whom his own scarcity compels to be thrifty and sober. In a word, if one man be constrained to forbear from wine by sickness, and another have only flat wine, and a third nothing but water, let every man content himself with his own lot, and willingly and quietly wean himself from the mirth which the Lord permitteth him not. The same is to be said of oil also. We see that unguents were commonly used among the Jews, as they were among the rest of the Eastern nations. But the case is otherwise with us at this day, because unguents are reserved for surgery rather than used for pleasure. The prophet, however, says that oil is to this intent also, that men should anoint themselves with it. But it is to be considered, that as men are over-prone to pleasure, the law of temperance must not

be separated from God's bounty, lest their liberty should be abused to luxurious excess. And always this exception must be added, lest any one should take a license for excess from this doctrine. Nevertheless, after men have been thoroughly warned to bridle their lust, it is profitable for them to know that God permitteth moderate pleasures where the means are sufficient; for otherwise they will not eat of bread and wine with a quiet conscience. Nay, they will make a scruple of conscience about the taste of water; and doubtless they will never come to the table but in fearfulness. Meanwhile, the greater part of the world will ingulf themselves in pleasures without discrimination, because they will not consider what it is that God giveth them leave to do. For God's fatherly loving-kindness must be the best instructress of moderation.

16 The Lord's trees shall be satisfied; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.

17 For there the birds make their nests; the stork, whose dwelling are the fir-trees.

18 The high mountains are for the deer, and the rocks are a den for the hedgehogs.

16 *The Lord's trees, &c.*] Again he treats of God's general providence in cherishing all creatures of the world. And first he says, that with the watering which he spoke of, the trees are satisfied, so that they yield shelter to the birds. Afterwards he says there is harbour also for the wild roes and conies, so that it may appear that no part of the world is neglected by our most loving father, nor any creature excluded from his care. The prophet therefore passes from men to trees; as if he should say, It is no marvel though God so bountifully cherish men, who are created after his own image, seeing he disdaineth not to extend his care even to the trees. By *the trees of the Lord* he means trees that are high and which excel in goodliness, because God's blessing is more apparent in them, as it scarce seems likely that the earth should yield any juice to reach to so great a height, considering that they renew their leaves yearly.

19 He appointed the moon for certain seasons: and the sun knoweth his going down.

20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth.

21 The lions roar after their prey, and do seek their meat from God.

22 The sun shall rise, and they shall retire, and crouch themselves in their dens.

23 Man shall go forth to his work, and unto his labour, until the evening.

19 *He appointed, &c.*] He now comes down to another commendation of God's providence; that is, that God hath so disposed the course of the sun and the moon, that their alternate succession harmonizes most aptly; for the variation in their interchanges is so far from producing confusion, that it is apparent to any one that time could not have been more conveniently distinguished. When he says *the moon was created for certain seasons*, the interpreters agree that this ought to be understood of the ordinary and fore-appointed days. For as the Hebrews are wont to reckon their months by the moon, they use her as their guide for their festival days, and as well for their sacred as their civil assemblies. Notwithstanding, I doubt not but there is an implied synecdoche; as if the prophet had said that the moon not only distinguishes nights from days, but also determines festivals, bounds years and months, and consequently serves to manifold purposes, because the distinction of times is derived from her course. When he says, *the sun knoweth his going down*, I understand it not only of his daily circuit, but also because one while coming nearer us, and another while going away again, he knows how to measure his own stations whereby to make summer, winter, spring and autumn. He says that *the beasts of the forest creep forth by night*, because they steal fearfully out of their dens. Some take the word *שָׁרָץ* for *to walk*, but the proper signification of it suits not amiss, because though hunger often drives wild beasts to madness, yet they covet the darkness of the night, in respect of which fearfulness they are said to creep forth.

21 *The lions roar, &c.*] Though lions, if hunger compel them, come abroad and make a roaring even at noon-day, yet has the prophet described what is wont to happen oftenest, and therefore he says that lions dare not stir abroad by day, but trust to the darkness of the night, when they will sally forth to their prey. And herein appears God's wonderful providence, that so dreadful a beast keeps himself in his den, that men may the more freely walk abroad. And that lions now and then range with greater liberty, is to be ascribed to the fall of Adam, which bereaved him of his dominion over the wild beasts. Nevertheless, in the meanwhile there still appear some remains of God's former blessing, as he withholdeth so many cruel beasts by the light of day, as it were by bars or chains. By saying that *they seek their meat*

at God's hand, he means not that they resort to God's providence, as though they acknowledged him for their fosterer; but he denotes the fact itself, to wit, that God in a wonderful manner provideth sustenance for such ravenous beasts.

22 *The sun shall arise, &c.*] He proceeds with the former proposition, that God distributeth the successions of time in suchwise that the day serves peculiarly for man. For except God should keep in awe so many wild beasts, which are enemies to us, mankind would soon be despatched. Since, therefore, now, after the fall of man, wild beasts may seem to be born for our destruction, and rend and tear in pieces all they meet with, this ferocity must needs be kept in restraint by God's providence. And to shut them up in their dens, he doth but set the light of the sun before them to make them afraid. This gracious goodness does the prophet commend from its necessity, because otherwise men would have no liberty to occupy themselves in their labour and businesses. Therefore, in that man is shielded with the light against the violence and harms of wild beasts, is seen the incomparable goodness of God, who hath made such fatherly provision for man's convenience.

24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

25 So is the great and wide sea also: therein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26 There go the ships; and that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein.

24 *O Lord, how manifold, &c.*] The prophet does not give a complete catalogue of God's works, which were endless, but only touches certain particulars, that each man may more advisedly weigh and consider with himself with what prudence God governeth the whole world, and every part thereof. And, therefore, breaking off his narrative, he cries out with wonderment, *how manifold are thy works!* even as we then only yield God due honour when, wrapt in amazement, we confess that our tongue and all our senses fail us. Now if a small portion of God's works make us amazed, how far too little is the capacity of our wit to comprehend the entire extent of them! And, first, he says that God made all things in wisdom; and afterwards adds that the earth is filled and replenished with his riches. More-

over, by the name of *wisdom*, he excludes not his might, but he means that there is nothing confused in the world; yea rather, he means that the mixture of so many things is ordered with consummate skill, so that nothing can be added, taken away, or amended. And this commendation is set against the unhallowed imaginations that often creep upon us, when we cannot attain to the reason of God's works. As though God were subject to our foolishness, so that he must be fain to bear the reproof of such as are blind in considering his works. By the same commendation also the prophet reproves their madness, who dream that the world was blown together by chance, as Epicurus babbled that the elements were composed of atoms. Now as it is a notion more than brutish that so goodly a fabrick, adorned with such inestimable garniture, was formed by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the prophet here bids us look more attentively upon God's wisdom and incredible workmanship, which shine forth in the whole government of the world. Under *riches* are comprehended God's goodness and bounty: for his riches are not to himself, but his abundance is for our behoof, lest we might want anything that we have need of. And we ought to feel assured that the earth is not so fruitful or rich of itself, but that it is the handmaid of God's liberality.

25 *So is the great, &c.*] After he has treated of the earthly records of God's glory, he gets him also to the sea, teaching us that the sea also is a new mirror of God's might and wisdom. For though there were no fishes at all in the sea, yet would it be wonderful were it only in respect of its amplitude, especially when one while it swells with the winds and tempests, and another while reposes in calmness. Furthermore, though navigation has proceeded from man's ingenuity, yet does it depend upon God's providence, who hath granted them passage through the waters. But the abundance and variety of fishes does not a little enhance God's glory in the sea. In an especial manner, however, he celebrates the leviathan, or the whale, because this one beast alone sets God's power before our eyes as exceeding terrible, and that is the reason why so much is said of him in the book of Job. And because his motion troubles men's hearts, no less than the sea, with mighty agitation, the prophet designates this motion of his by the term *play*, in respect of God; as if he should say, The sea is given to the whales, as a field to sport themselves in.

27 All these wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them food in due season.

28 Thou shalt give it them, and they shall gather it: thou shalt open thy hand, and they shall be filled with good.

29 Thou shalt hide thy face, they shall be afraid: thou shalt take away their breath, they shall die, and turn again to their dust.

30 Thou shalt send forth thy breath, and they shall be created; and thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

27 *All these wait, &c.*] Here again the prophet describes God to us as a provident father of a family, and nurturer towards all living things. First, he had said that fodder was created on the hills for cattle to be fed with, and afterwards the food is given to the very lions by the hand of the same God, although they live upon prey. Now, adding a circumstance, he expresses the same wonderfulness of God's liberality. For though the several sorts of living creatures are almost innumerable, and of each sort so many, yet is there not one of them which has not need of daily sustenance: this is what he means when he says that all things *wait upon God*, as if he should say they could not continue so much as three days, unless God, relieving their daily need, should refresh every one of them. The great diversity of fruits has reference to this, because God giveth and appointeth to each of them their convenient and proper food. Now though the brute beasts have no reason and discretion to seek relief of their necessity at God's hand, but rather go grovelling upon the earth to glut themselves with food, yet did the prophet speak properly in saying that they wait upon God, whose bounty must relieve their want of food, lest they perish presently. Neither is the marking out of the time superfluous, that God furnisheth sustenance in succession for all living creatures, so that they may find whereon to feed all the year round. For seeing that in winter the earth shuts up her compassion, what would become of them if he should not provide them sustenance for a long time? The miracle, then, is the greater, in that God, making the earth fruitful at stated times, extendeth his blessing to the residue of the year, although he make a shew of dearth and famine. For what would be more wretched than we, when the earth in winter shuts up her store, if hope of new increase should not cheer our hearts? In which sense he says fitly, that *God openeth his hand*. For if wheat should grow up daily, God's providence should be less clearly seen. But when the earth becomes barren, it is as if God should shut his



hand. Whence it follows that when he maketh it fruitful, he in a manner stretcheth his hand out of heaven, to give us meat. But if he give sustenance in due season to the wild and brute beasts, whereon to feed till they are full, doubtless his blessing shall be to us as a horn of plenty that can never be exhausted, provided we ourselves hinder it not through the impediment of our unbelief.

29 *Thou shalt hide, &c.*] By these words he teaches that we stand or fall according to God's will. For we stand so far forth as he maintaineth us by his power, but as soon as he withdraweth his quickening spirit, we decay. Plato also saw this, who often teaches in direct terms that there is but one God, and that all things have their being in him alone. And I doubt not but that it was God's will to awaken all men by that heathen writer, that they might know that they draw their life elsewhere than from themselves. And first, he says they are afraid if God hide his face away; and secondly, that if he take away their breath they die, and consequently turn again to dust. By which words he gives us to understand that the eyes of God are life-giving, when he vouchsafeth to look upon us, and that they inspire life into all creatures as long as his countenance beameth upon them serenely. Doubly inexcusable, therefore, is our blindness, if we on the other side cast not our eyes upon that goodness which quickeneth the whole world. And he describes the destruction of living creatures by gradations, at what time God draweth away his secret quickening, that he may on the contrary part the better commend his continual inspiration by which they are quickened. And though he could have proceeded further, namely, that all things shall return to nought, yet he was content with this general and popular mode of teaching, that whatsoever is not cherished by God, falls altogether into decay. Again, he says that the world is daily *renewed*, because God sendeth forth his breath. And truly, in the propagation of cattle, we see continually a new creation of the world. And whereas now he calls the same breath, God's breath, which erewhile he said was the breath of living creatures, there is no contrariety therein. God sendeth forth the breath which abideth in his power, whither he listeth; as soon as he hath sent it forth all things are created; and by this means, what was his, he maketh ours. But this gives no countenance to the old dream of the Manichees, which that dirty dog Servetus has made still worse in our time. The Manichees said that man's soul is a particle of the divine Spirit, and is propagated from it, but this varlet has had the audacity to say that oxen, asses, and dogs, are parts of the divine essence. The Manichees

at least alleged, to colour their error, that man's soul was made after the image of God, but to transfer the same to swine and cattle, is an abomination doubly detestable. But the prophet meant anything rather than to part God's spirit, so that a portion of it should dwell substantially in every living creature, but he termed that the breath of God which proceeds from him. And by the way he instructs us that it is ours, because it is given us as our life. The effect tends to this, that when we see the world daily decay and renewed again, it is a mirror wherein God's quickening power is reflected to us. For all the deaths of living things that occur, are so many examples of our nothingness, as I may term it; and when other things grow up in their stead, there is shewn a certain renewing of the world. Seeing, then, that the world daily dies, and quickens again in its parts, it is obvious to conclude from this, that they have not any being but by God's secret operation.

31 Glory be to the Lord for ever: let the Lord rejoice in his own works.

32 When he looketh upon the earth, it shall tremble; if he touch the mountains, they shall smoke.

33 I will sing unto the Lord while I live: I will praise my God as long as I have any being.

34 Let my words be acceptable unto him: I will rejoice in the Lord.

35 Let the wicked be consumed out of the earth, and the ungodly till they cease to be any more. My soul, praise thou the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

31 *Glory be to, &c.*] He shews to what purpose he has hitherto commended God's power, wisdom, and goodness in his works; namely, that he might lift up men's thoughts to praise him. For it is no mean honour that God hath furnished the world with such glorious decorations for our sakes, so that we may not only be beholders of this beauteous spectacle, but also enjoy the manifold abundance and variety of good things which are set out upon it for us. The only recompense that God requireth for it, is the gratitude to yield him his due praise. When he adds, *let the Lord rejoice in his works*, it is in nowise superfluous. For he desires that the order which God hath appointed from the beginning, may proceed in the lawful use of his gifts. *For as it repented him that he had made man*, Gen. vi. 6, even so, when he seeth his blessing defiled by our corruptions, he ceaseth to take pleasure in it. And surely the



wild disorder that happens when the elements cease to do their duty, testifies that displeasure and weariness drive God to interrupt the even course of his beneficence; not that such passions are incident to him, but he putteth on the character of a most loving father, who delighteth himself in cherishing his children tenderly, and in dealing with them liberally. In the next verse he shews that the state of the world is founded in that delight of God; because if he did not quicken the earth with his gladsome and fatherly affection, as soon as he did but look upon it with a stern eye, he would make it quake, and burn up the very mountains.

33 *I will sing, &c.*] He leads others by his own example, and declares that he will never be weary of setting forth God's praises as long as he lives. And the uttermost bound of praising God, he places in death. Not that the saints surcease from this office of godliness when they have migrated into another life; but because we are created to this end, that God's name should be celebrated by us upon earth. But, as he acknowledges himself unworthy to offer so precious a sacrifice to God, he humbly beseeches him that the praises which he will sing to him may be well accepted, though they proceed out of unclean lips. True it is that God liketh or approveth nothing more than the setting forth his praises, according also as there is nothing that he requireth so much at our hands. But as our uncleanness defiles that which of its own nature was most holy, the prophet has just cause to flee to God's forbearing, lest he might refuse to admit our songs; and therefore the apostle, Heb. x. 9, teaches that our sacrifices of thanksgiving please God so far forth as they are offered through Christ. But now, when all men without exception enjoy God's benefits, forasmuch as scarce the hundredth person has an eye to the author of them, the prophet adds also, *I will rejoice in the Lord*; implying therein a rare virtue. For nothing is more difficult than so to call home the mind from the wandering joys that vanish away through heaven and earth, that it may keep itself fixed on God.

35 *Let the wicked, &c.*] This imprecation is connected with that sentence, *let God rejoice in his works*. For as the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, hence it comes to pass that God hath the less delight in his own workmanship, and in a manner misliketh it. For it cannot be, but that uncleanness must displease him, which being spread abroad through all parts of the world, mars and corrupts that noble work of his. Therefore, since the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God's gifts, cause the world after a sort to degenerate and fall away from its first

original, rightfully does the prophet desire to have them weeded out, even till there be none of them left. Let us then bear in mind so to weigh God's providence, that, being wholly given to obey him, we may duly and purely use the benefits which he sanctifieth to our use. Further, let it grieve us that such precious treasures should be so impiously squandered; and let us hold it as a horrible portent, that mortal men should not only forget their Maker, but also as it were purposely turn to a preposterous and unworthy end, whatsoever good things he hath bestowed upon them.

## PSALM CV.

*He commends God's singular grace for freely adopting as his own one people out of the whole world. And to shew that he made not a covenant with Abraham and his offspring in word only, after he had delivered them he ceased not also to heap innumerable benefits upon them, and that in order that when they were delivered, they again on their part should faithfully observe his covenant, and give themselves wholly to the unfeigned worship of him.*

1 Praise the Lord; call upon his name; declare his works among nations.

2 Sing unto him, sing praise unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3 Rejoice in his holy name: let the hearts of them that seek the Lord rejoice.

4 Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek after his face continually.

5 Be mindful of the marvellous works which he hath done; of his wonders, and of the judgments of his mouth.

1 *Praise the Lord, &c.*] The object of this exordium is no other than this: that the offspring of Abraham should ground all their blessedness on God's free adoption. For though it were no contemptible benefit, that they were created men, that they were cherished in the world by his fatherly care, and that they received sustenance at his hand, yet was it a far more excellent prerogative, to be chosen as the peculiar people of God. For as the race of all mankind is cursed in Adam, the state of that people was so exempted from the rest of the nations, that they might boast that they

were consecrated to God. And that is the reason why the prophet throngs together so many words for the commendation of this grace. For he treats not of the government of the whole world, as he did in the former Psalm, but sets out the fatherly goodwill wherewith God embraced the Israelites. He names, indeed, indefinitely, his works and his wonders, but he restrains them both to the spiritual covenant, whereby he chose out a church which, while on earth, should have its thoughts fixed on the heavenly life. For he does not now call them wonders, that the sun, moon, and stars daily rise to give light to the world, that the earth bears fruit in its seasons, that abundance of all good things is given to living creatures for food, that so many conveniences are bountifully poured out upon all mankind; but that out of the lost race of Adam, God hath chosen himself a small portion, to which he might shew himself a father; and therefore he bids them rejoice in the name of God, and call upon him; a privilege with which the church alone is honoured. Whence it follows, that his talk is directed to none but the faithful, whom God, taking them under his protection and guardianship, would have to glory in his name.

4 *Seek the Lord, &c.*] Though he had just now signalized the faithful with this title, that *they seek God*, yet he now exhorts them to zeal in seeking him, and not without good cause. For, it is true, this is peculiarly the mark whereby the faithful are discerned from the worldlings, but they come far short of seeking him so earnestly as they ought; and therefore they have need of spurs continually, wherewith to prick them forward, although they run of their own accord. For they are neither gadding persons nor altogether inert, nor such as are immoveably fixed on earthly grossness, whom the prophet stirs up to seek God; but such as with a forward mind went about it already; and that because he sees them obstructed by many hindrances, so that they cannot run fast enough. How willing soever, therefore, we may be, yet have we need of this pricking forward, that it may correct our slowness. When he says, *his strength and his face*, no doubt but he denotes that kind of manifestation whereby God drew the faithful to him in those days, according to the ignorance of the time. And we know that in many other places, the ark of the covenant is wont to be termed *the strength and face of God*, because the people were, by these symbols, both reminded that God was near to them, and also felt his power by experience. Therefore, the more familiarly God sheweth himself, the more prompt would he have our hearts to seek him; as

doubtless the helps wherewith God relieveth our weakness, should kindle our zeal the more. Modesty, also, is commended to us, that, being mindful of our slowness in seeking God, we may hold the way that he hath appointed, and not scorn the rudiments by which he bringeth us to himself by little and little. Also there is added, *continually*, lest any man should grow weary in this race, or be puffed up with a foolish opinion of perfection, to neglect the outward furtherances of godliness, as many do, who, when they have proceeded four or five feet in the knowledge of God, exempt themselves from the common state, as though they were better than the angels. Again, he bids them remember God's miracles which he wrought at the delivering of his people, because we know that there he manifested his power in a strange and unwonted manner. By *the judgments of his mouth*, some understand the law. But as I read all three in one strain, I had rather expound it of the signs by which God brake the pride of Pharaoh. There is yet still a doubt of the reason of the expression. Some think them called the judgments of God's mouth because he foretold them; which is probable. But the simpler acceptation were, that God's incredible power appeared in his miracles, whence it was obvious to gather that he was the worker of them. I do not, indeed, exclude the ministration of Moses, whom God had raised up to be a prophet to the Egyptians, who in telling them what was to come should even thereby prove that it was not chance. In my judgment, however, the prophet alludes to the evident character itself of the miracles; as if he should say, though God had spoken not a word, yet did it openly appear by the very fact, that he was the avenger of his people.

6 O ye seed of Abraham, *which are* his servants, ye sons of Jacob his chosen.

7 He is the Lord our God; his judgments are through all the earth.

8 He hath been alway mindful of his covenant, and of the promise that he made to a thousand generations:

9 *Even* that he made to Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac;

10 And hath confirmed it to Jacob for a law, and unto Israel for an everlasting covenant.

11 Saying, I will give thee the land of Canaan, the measuring line of your inheritance:

6 *Ye seed of Abraham, &c.*] He calls upon his own countrymen by name, whom, as has been said, God had bound to him by special adoption. For it was a still more sacred bond of alliance, to be preferred before all nations by the mere goodwill of God. And in calling them *the sons of Abraham, and children of Jacob*, he warns them that they had not attained so great honour by their own arm, but because they were descended from holy fathers: although he avouches at the same time that the holiness of their fathers issued from God's election only, and not from nature. For he states both things expressly; namely, that before they were born children of Abraham they were already heirs of the covenant, because they would draw their original from holy fathers: and also that the fathers themselves acquired not this prerogative by their own desert or worthiness, but were chosen freely; for in the same respect calls he Jacob *the chosen of God*. For though Abraham himself be also called *God's servant*, Gen. xvi. 24, because he was a pure worshipper of him, yet in the second place the prophet testifies that the beginning of it came not of men, but of God alone, who vouchsafed to take them to be his peculiar possession. From this covenant he infers that though God's dominion stretch through the whole world, and he execute his judgment everywhere, yet is he the peculiar God of that one people; according as it is said in the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 8, *When the Highest divided the nations, and when he severed peoples, he stretched his measuring-line upon Jacob*. And once again the prophet meant to shew that the excellence of the Israelites was not in that they were better than others, but because God had a love to them. For if God's judgments extend themselves through all the regions of the world, the state of all nations is equal in respect of them. Whence it follows that the difference is in the love of God, and that the fountain of their worthiness is free gift. Therefore though God in his own right possess the whole earth, yet, says he, he hath taken one people to himself to reign among them. And this admonition pertains to us also at this day: for if we weigh our calling well, undoubtedly we shall find that it was nothing from without him that led God to prefer us before others, but that he was contented to do it of his own mere grace.

8 *He hath been alway, &c.*] Now he commends the real effect of the covenant, as they term it, and proves what he spoke before from the deliverance, that is, that God reigneth alike over all nations, and yet that he hath embraced none with his favour, but the offspring of Abraham alone. For whence cometh it that God, in delivering his people, displayed

the might of his arm in so many miracles, unless it was to fulfil the promise that he had made to his servants in time past. It is clear, therefore, that the old covenant was the cause of the deliverance; for that God might be true to his promises, it behoved him first to be merciful. And forasmuch as there had passed a long series of years between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word *mindful*; as if he should say, God's promises do not become antiquated by long continuance of time, but even when the world believes them to be clean gone and effaced by forgetfulness, the remembrance of them is fresh before God, to fulfil them in due season. And this he confirms better in the next member, where he commends the correspondence and agreement between the form of the covenant and the effect of it. Not for a day or two, says he, hath God covenanted with Abraham, neither hath he determined his covenant by the life of him alone, but he hath promised to become the God of his posterity even to a thousand generations. Therefore though the performance were delayed a long while, yet doth God shew by the very deed that his faithfulness does not fall to the ground, or fail by length of time. Moreover, as Abraham was the first that was called, yea even when he was mingled with idolaters, therefore the prophet begins with the person of him. But he declares that the covenant was ratified afterwards in the hand of his son and son's son also. God then deposited his covenant with Abraham, and by solemn oath bound himself to be the God of him and of his seed. But that his promise might be the more assured, it was his will to renew it to Isaac and Jacob. For such an extension of it makes God's faithfulness sink the deeper in men's hearts; and further, causes God's grace to be the better known and spread abroad, when it is often avouched on recurring occasions. And therefore it is expressed by degrees how firm the stability of that covenant is: for what is said concerning the patriarchs, pertains alike to all men. The prophet says that God swore unto Isaac: Had he not sworn to Abraham before? Yes, doubtless. He says also that it was *confirmed to Jacob for a law, and for an everlasting covenant*: Was it because the covenant was but temporal and transitory before, and had then altered its nature? That is altogether apart from the prophet's meaning. But by his diverse forms of speech he avouches a full and substantial confirmation of the covenant, so that if the calling were obscure in one man, it might be more enlightened by conveying over the avouchment thereof to them that came after, because in so doing the assurance thereof was the better ratified. Here, again,



we must call to mind that God beareth with our weakness with exceeding kindness, when both by oath and also by repeated word of mouth he confirmeth to us what he had once promised. Wherefore the fouler is our unthankfulness in discrediting him, not only when he speaketh but also when he sweareth.

11 *Saying, I will, &c.*] Seeing that this was but a small portion of the grace offered to the fathers, the prophet seems to enclose within too narrow limits the covenant of God, which extended even to the hope of an eternal heritage. But the prophet thought it enough to shew by the figure synecdoche, that what God had promised to the fathers, was performed and fulfilled. For his drift was this; that they had no other right to possess the land of Canaan, but because it was the lawful inheritance of Abraham by the covenant of God. Surely if any man shew the earnest of a contract, he impeaches not the contract. Therefore when the prophet proves by a visible symbol, that God made not a covenant with his servants in vain, nor disappointed their hope, he does not take away or abolish the other parts of his grace. Nay rather, when the Israelites hear that they possess the land by right of inheritance, because they are the chosen people of God, it becomes them to extend their view further, so that they may comprehend all the privileges wherewith it hath pleased God to garnish them. And hence it is to be noted, that when God in some part fulfilleth his promises towards us, we are base and thankless, if this same experience be not available to the confirmation of our faith. For it is not to be doubted, but that as often as God sheweth himself a father towards us, he sealeth the force and efficacy of his word really, as they term it, in our hearts. But if the land of Canaan ought to have led the Israelites to heaven, because they knew themselves to be brought into it in respect of the covenant, far more weight ought it to have with us, that God hath exhibited his Christ, in whom all his promises are *yea and Amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. When he saith, *I will give thee the measuring-line of your inheritance*, the alteration of the number shews that God made his covenant generally with all the people, though he spake the words to a few, even as a little before we see that it was a decree, or everlasting law. For though the holy patriarchs were the chief depositaries of the covenant, yet did they not take the grace that was offered, as appertaining to themselves exclusively, but so as to be shared in common with their posterity.

12 When they were yet but very few in number ; and strangers in the land.



13 And walked about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people,

14 He suffered not men to hurt them ; and re-proved even kings for their sakes.

15 Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

12 *When they were, &c.*] He reckons up the benefits which God had vouchsafed to the holy fathers, that it might appear that long before the deliverance, the covenant was not in vain. For the declaration, which we shall see, tends to this effect, that he had cherished Abraham wonderfully ever since he took him under his protection, and also that his fatherly love and care appeared manifestly in defending the other two patriarchs. Howbeit, when he says they were very few in number, by this circumstance he not only commends God's power, but also therewith points out the cause wherefore God was so beneficent to his servants. First, therefore, we must bear this in mind, that lest the Jews should arrogate anything to themselves, the prophet in express words alleges that their fathers had experienced God's favour, even then when they were as yet weak and despised, wandering and poor, and, according to the flesh, every way miserable. So also Moses reproaches them, Deut. vii. 7; *God chose not your fathers because they were more in number than other nations, or because they were any nobler than they, but because he had a love to them.* In a word, in the choosing of this people there was no regard had either of multitude, or of any excellence. There was but the house of Abraham alone, and that issueless. Isaac having but two sons was fain to banish one of them afar, and he saw the other cut off from his family. Although the house of Jacob were more fruitful, yet was it but one house. Besides, they were not only ignoble and despised, as being sojourners in a strange land, but also dearth and scarcity of other things, compelled them to shift places often. Granting all this, the respect of man's worthiness falls to the ground altogether, and it appears manifestly, that whatsoever benefits God bestowed upon them, flowed not out of any other fountain than that of his love. And as for the cause of his love, it is not to be sought for out of him. Now if the Holy Ghost so carefully commend God's grace in earthly benefits, how much rather must he be thought to do so when the subject is the heavenly heritage! When he says, *they fled from nation to nation*, by this circumstance he declares more plainly, how wonderful God's protection was in preserving

them. If they had found any quiet nest, this comfort had been a notable sign of God's grace. But seeing they were as exiles in divers countries, and driven from one place to another with bitter scorn, just as chaff is driven before the wind, the guardian power of God thence shines forth more clearly. Inasmuch, then, as their life everywhere hung by a thread, and the shifting of their sojourn made them from time to time subject to new injuries, it was the power of God only that preserved them in safety.

14 *He suffered not, &c.*] We know it was not two or three that were against Abraham and his children, but they were troubled of whole nations. Therefore, as many rose up in troops one after another, the prophet says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for here the word **וְלֹא** is used. Afterwards he magnifies God's love towards his servants in that he set himself against kings for their sakes. For in that God spared not the kings of Egypt and Gerar, it appears what great account he made of the welfare of Abraham and his offspring. For I told you just now, that the holy fathers were of no value or estimation before the world: so much the more signally, therefore, did God display his goodness, in preferring them before kings. Now see we that the Jews were humbled in the person of their fathers, lest they might surmise that favour in the sight of God was procured for them by any appearance of desert.

15 *Touch not mine anointed, &c.*] Now proceeds he further, that as God undertook war against kings for love of his servants, they were defended by him, not only in such sort as he is wont to succour men that are in misery and are wrongfully oppressed, but also because he had taken them under his protection to shield them. For not only in the general respect doth God defend his servants, but also because he hath professed himself their avenger in right of his free adoption. This is the reason why the prophet now signalizes the holy patriarchs with two titles, calling them prophets, and the anointed of God. Of other men, God would have said, Touch not guiltless men, hurt not the wretched, who have deserved no such thing at your hands. But in Abraham and his children, he sheweth another reason why he should defend them; he terms them *anointed*, whom he had chosen to be his peculiar people. In the same sense he calleth them *prophets*, with which title Abraham himself also is adorned, Gen. xx. 7; and that not only because God had manifested himself more nearly to them, but also because they faithfully spread abroad the heavenly doctrine, so that the memorial thereof might survive them, and flourish when they were dead. As yet, indeed, the use of anointing, such as

existed afterwards under the law, was not: but what God shewed afterwards in the ceremonies of the law, that does the prophet avouch to have been in Abraham in very deed, according as God hath engraven the mark of sanctification on all his elect. Now if God's inward anointing were of so great force at such time as God had not published so much as the figures of the law, with how much greater care will he defend his servants now, after he hath exhibited the fulness of anointing in his only-begotten Son!

16 And he called a dearth upon the land: he brake all the staff of bread.

17 He sent a man before them, Joseph was sold for a slave.

18 They nipped his feet in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul.

19 Until the time that his sentence came; the word of the Lord tried him.

16 *And he called a dearth, &c.*] Here he sets forth a most illustrious proof of God's providence towards his elect, at what time the covenant might seem void and disannulled. For, as I said before, the inheritance of the land of Canaan was added for assurance in lieu of an earnest, or pledge. Seeing, then, that the going down into Egypt, which deprived Jacob's house of the sight of the land, could not make the covenant drop through, therein God's constancy shone forth the brighter. And yet by this self-same temptation God shewed more manifestly how provident a father he was in defending the offspring of Abraham. But it is better to weigh every part by itself. First, he teaches that the dearth which drove Jacob into Egypt came not by chance. And though we treat now but of one dearth, yet must we set it down for a general rule, that there is no other cause of any manner of scarcity, but that God, withdrawing his hand, taketh away the means of sustenance. But the curse of God is expressed more emphatically, when it is said that the dearth was *called*; as though it was ready at God's commandment as a minister of his wrath. Whereby we are admonished that famine and pestilence, and other scourges, arise not by chance, nor proceed by blind casualty, but are directed by God's hand whither he listeth, and are obedient to his will. Then follows the manner of calling the dearth; that is, when God *breaketh the strength of bread*. And very apt is the metaphor of *staff*; because the power that God hath put into bread, and the property of strengthening

man by a secret stay wherewith to sustain us, lie hidden in it as a staff, so long as it is the Lord's will that our strength shall be refreshed by this means. And this staff is broken in two ways; either when he taketh away the supply of grain necessary to sustain us, (and so seems Ezekiel to take it, iv. 16, saying, *I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: they shall eat by measure and in sorrow, and they shall drink water with fear, lest perchance they should decay,*) or else, when God breatheth in anger upon the bread itself, so that it may not take away hunger, but such as seek to satisfy themselves by devouring it, remain hungry still. And truly this second is commonly added to the barrenness of the earth; that God taketh away its sustaining virtue from the bread, because bread of itself quickeneth not, (as it is said in Deut. viii. 3,) but borroweth its inward operation from the mouth of God.

17 *He sent a man before them, &c.*] This whole passage shews, as it were graphically, that whatsoever befell that nation was governed by the hand and counsel of God. The simple narration would have been, that there came a dearth into the land at such time as Joseph was sold by his brethren and carried down into Egypt. But the prophet speaks emphatically, That Joseph was by God's appointment sent before into Egypt to feed his father's house, and afterwards a dearth was called, and then a remedy given by God's providence beyond all hope. Now though this is generally true in all worldly affairs, yet the prophet commemorates the peculiar care in governing the church, and he recites that as second in place which is first in order of time. Therefore, in the word *sending*, the preterpluperfect tense will better express the sense; that is, that before God afflicted the land of Canaan with famine, he had prepared his remedy for his servant Jacob and his household: for he had sent Joseph before as a caterer to provide them victuals. And he sets down as it were two contraries, whereby God's providence may appear the better. For how was Joseph sent of God? In this way; that when he was doomed to death, it happened that his brothers preferred selling him to leaving him in his grave. That very selling, therefore, if considered merely in itself, like a cloud interposed, darkens and muffles up the providence of God. For when counsel was taken to murder him, who would have thought he would have been the sustainer of his father's house? Afterwards there was devised a kind of death for him of mitigated cruelty; but when he was cast into a well, how could he succour others? The most sanguine hope was, that at length, having been sold, he *came* up out of the pit. But yet, even then again also, he

was well nigh rotting all his life long in prison. Who could think that processes so intricate and circuitous were controlled by God's providence? The prophet therefore meets this by saying, that in respect of men he was indeed *sold*, but yet was sent before by the appointment of God. This place is worth noting, because it admirably avouches God's providence against the perverse dulness of our flesh. For either because we linger in the intermediate causes that encounter us, or ascribe to man's policy whatsoever is done, or think it happens by chance, no man in a manner pierces to God. But the selling of Joseph is not held out here as a veil to hide God's providence, but rather as a signal monument whereby we are taught, that when men have practised this or that, the issues are in the hand of God; or rather, that he boweth men's hearts this way and that way by his hidden instinct, so that he bringeth to pass the things that he hath determined by them whether they will or not. So did Joseph himself teach his brethren, Gen. xlv. 5; *It was not you that sold me, but God hath sent me before you to be a father to you.* Howbeit, God so governeth men's affairs with a secret rein, and useth their unhallowed devices to a right end, as that his judgments are notwithstanding not contaminated by their depravity. The brethren of Joseph do wickedly in conspiring the death of him; wrongfully also do they sell him: the fault abides in themselves. God, by their hand, provideth as well for them as for their father Jacob, yea and for all his church. This holy purpose contracts no soil or spot by the malice of them, which tended altogether to an opposite end, according as the same Joseph witnessed afterwards, Gen. l. 20; *True it is that you meant evil towards me, but God hath turned it to good.*

18 *They nipped his feet, &c.*] Not without cause does he follow up that mysterious proceeding which might overcast men's minds with a cloud, so that they might not look up to God's determination. For what is less meet, than that God should come to his purposed end by means of ways so opposite and circuitous? But God's providence comes out with much more brightness by overcoming so many obstacles, than if he should despatch the whole matter by a short and easy cut. Had Joseph, at his very first coming, been presented to the king and made ruler of Egypt, the passage to the second point had been easy. But seeing he was carried away into prison, and there led his life apart from the company of men, as one half dead; and a long while after, beyond all hope, became known to the king, that sudden change illustrates the miracle in no ordinary degree. This circuitous course, therefore, which the prophet mentions,

makes not a little to the effect of the matter. Joseph was ten times dead ere he was sold: therefore, as often had God a care of his church by delivering the father thereof. When after his coming into Egypt he was passed over from hand to hand till he came into another grave, does it not hereby more evidently appear that God doth then most of all keep watch for his servants, when he seemeth to be asleep in heaven? and to make better progress by these sundry windings, than if he should have gone straight forward, yea, or run apace? Therefore the prophet says, *his feet were nipped in the stocks*: which, though Moses declare not, yet is it certain that he speaks it as a thing known and published. And certainly many things were delivered by tradition to the Jews, of which there is no mention in the scripture. Also, it is likely enough that he was not put under mild restraint at first, as it happened afterwards; but rather that he was rigorously confined. Now, whether we read that his soul entered into the iron, or the iron into his soul, the sense remains unaltered; namely, that the holy man was galled with fetters, as if his life had been given over to the sword. Whence it follows, that there was no more life to be hoped for in him, than in a dead carcase.

19 *Until the time, &c.*] Here the prophet teaches that though according to fleshly understanding God seem to be too slow, yet he holdeth supreme rule in all things, that he may at length in due season accomplish what he hath determined. Doubtless the word *sentence* in this place signifies not a doctrine, lesson, or instruction, but the heavenly decree. And although the relative *his* may be understood as well of God himself as of Joseph, yet I prefer this latter, that is, until Joseph's deliverance was manifested, which lay hidden in God's counsels. It is always to be borne in mind, that the prophet calls back men's minds from that heathenish imagination, that fortune exercises a blind and capricious control over human affairs. For as nothing could be more involved in uncertainty than the welfare of the church, so long as Joseph was accounted for a condemned person, the prophet here lifts us up, and bids us consider the hidden decree, whose manifestation was not yet seasonable or ripe. After the same manner I interpret that which follows, *the word of God tried him*. For to expound it of prophesying, as many do, seems over curious. Verily, until the time that there appeared a more happy issue, which God kept long hidden and suspended, Joseph's patience was severely tried. And what worldly men, who acknowledge not God to be the governor of men's affairs, call fate, the prophet distinguishes with a more appropriate name, terming it God's



word and each man's sentence. Neither is there any reason why we should reject the French word *destinée*. When the Stoics dispute, or rather babble of destiny, they not only involve themselves and the thing itself in intricate perplexities, but also the true principle; because, by imagining a concatenation of causes they take from God the government of the world. It is a wicked forgery so to link together causes involved one within another, as that God himself should be tied to them. Therefore our faith ought to mount up to the secret counsel of God, whereby he directeth all things to their end without any restraint. By the way also, this place teaches that the end of the afflictions of the godly is foreset by God; namely, until they are thoroughly proved.

20 The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and delivered him.

21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance;

22 To bind his princes unto his will; and to teach the old men to be wise.

23 And Israel came into Egypt, and Jacob was a stranger in the land of Ham.

24 And he increased his people mightily; he multiplied him above his oppressors.

20 *The king sent, &c.*] He decks out Joseph's deliverance with glorious words, because God's singular power appeared conspicuously in a matter so incredible. For what is more unlikely than that a most potent king should fetch a foreign person out of prison to make him ruler of his whole realm, and to put him next in honour to himself? And when he says, *to bind his princes*, they commonly expound it, that the chief sovereignty was given to Joseph himself, so that he might cast even the nobles of the realm into prison at his own pleasure. Others, because this interpretation seems somewhat harsh, derive the word *לְבַדְּוֹ* from the word *לְדַבֵּר*, which signifies *to instruct*, so that the letter *ב* should be changed into the letter *ד*. But I marvel that neither of them discerned the metaphor in this saying; that is, that Joseph held the lords of Egypt bound to him at his pleasure, or subject to his power. He treats not here of fetters, but of the bond or obligation of obedience, when as well the princes as all the residue hung upon his beck. And as soon after he adds, *to teach the elders to be wise*, he shews that Joseph lorded it not like a tyrant, (even as it is a hard and a



rare matter for men, when they have the law in their own hands, not to indulge their humour in anything,) but was a rule and pattern of most moderate government even to the chief of them.

23 *And Israel came, &c.*] He rehearses not the whole history, neither was it necessary, but only sets before our eyes God's providence, which scarce one in a hundred considers when they read that which is written by Moses. Therefore he says that after Joseph had been sent before to give entertainment to his father and his household, then Jacob came into Egypt: that is, when things were wonderfully brought in order, that they might find store of sustenance among a most proud people, even when all other men starved for want of food. Whence it appears that the slowness of God, as it is thought, tends to no other purpose than to accomplish his work when occasion served best.

24 *And he increased, &c.*] Now God's singular favour towards his church is commended by another circumstance, forasmuch as that people was within a short space of time increased beyond the common rate, in which behalf appeared the wonderful blessing of God. And therefore so much the more offensive is the barking of some, when they insolently scoff at the multiplying of the people which is reported by Moses, because it surpasses the common course of nature: and if the people should have increased but after the ordinary manner, they would immediately have objected that there was no work of God to be seen therein; so the only thing that they hunt for by their cavillings is to do away with God's blessing. But we, who know it is not right to measure God's power either by our own reason or by the common law of nature, must reverently commend this extraordinary working of his. That which follows is somewhat obscure, especially if we read that the people was *strengthened*; for the prophet seems not to denote the time that the Israelites lived at ease in prosperous state, but the time that they were scornfully oppressed as slaves. Notwithstanding, we may by anticipation understand it of what was to come; for in the next verse the prophet says that the Egyptians, changing their minds, began to rage cruelly against the people. Although, then, the Egyptians did not as yet vent their fury upon the Israelites openly, while they were yet increasing both in number and strength, yet the prophet calls them persecutors; though it is certain that the Israelites were a terror to their enemies, even when they were kept under as slaves. And Moses, *Exod. i. 12*, affirms openly that God's blessing was still manifest, even under their tyranny and wrongful oppressions.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, and to deal craftily with his servants.

26 He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They set forth among them the message of his signs and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they were not disobedient to his words.

29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs, *even* in the chambers of their kings.

25 *He turned their heart, &c.*] That the Egyptians from being good and courteous hosts became afterwards cruel enemies, the prophet ascribes also to God's counsel. Certain it is, that their own malicious nature, pride, and covetousness drove them to it, but not without God's providence, who by incomprehensible means accomplisheth his work in such-wise in the reprobates, as that he bringeth forth light even of darkness. As the manner of speech seems somewhat harsh, they translate it passively, that *the Egyptians' hearts were turned*; which answers not to the context, and is also insipid. For we see it is the prophet's deliberate purpose to put the whole government of the church under God, so that nothing may fall out but according to his will. Now if the tender ears of some cannot away with this thing, as somewhat harsh, the Holy Ghost in other places also, boldly avoucheth that men's minds are driven to and fro by God's secret instinct, Prov. xxi. 1, so that they can neither will nor work anything but by his appointment. But what madness is it, to embrace nothing but what commends itself to man's reason! what authority shall God's word be of, if it be not admitted further than it pleases us? They, then, that reject this doctrine, because it is not so pleasant to man's understanding, are puffed up with froward arrogance. Others malignantly abuse it, not for lack of skill, or through oversight, but only to stir up trouble in the church, or else to bring it into odium among the ignorant. Some over-timid persons could find in their hearts that this doctrine were buried for quietness sake; bad umpires surely. For we see that this was the cause, in times past, why the writers of the church swerved from the true and genuine Gospel, and turned themselves to heathen philosophy. For whence comes our freewill, whence comes our righteousness of

works? but because the good fathers were afraid lest they should give occasion to evil-tongued or petulant persons, if they should freely profess what is set forth in the scriptures. And had not God, as it were by strong hand, compelled Austin, he had been altogether like the rest. But God, as it were polishing him with a hammer, corrected that foolish wisdom, which rears its crest against the Holy Ghost. We see the Holy Ghost avoucheth, that the Egyptians were in suchwise evil, as that God turned their hearts to the hating of his people. The middle-course men seek to evade the difficulty by saying that he turned their hearts because he suffered them; or else, because when the Egyptians set their hearts to hatred, he employed their wickedness as an instrument which happened to come in his way; as though the Holy Ghost were deficient in the power of language, and spake one thing for another. If this seem absurd at the first blush, we must understand that it is not for nought that in other places God's judgments are called *unsearchable*, Rom. xi. 33, and a *bottomless depth*, Psalm xxxvi. 7. For unless our capacity came short of the height of them, there would be no intricacy at all in them. By the way it is to be understood, that the root of the malice was in the Egyptians themselves, so that the fault cannot be transferred to God. I say they were inwardly and of their own accord wicked, and not forced by another's compulsion. And in respect of God, though the cause appear not, yet must God's will suffice us. But the cause also appears, which vindicates God from all unrighteousness. Howbeit, if we have once imbibed this principle, that men must reverently acquiesce in God's word, these mysteries, which offend the proud or over-wary, will be received by us without gainsaying. Afterwards, the prophet expresses the manner of their hurting: for the Egyptians did not assault God's people openly to despatch them out of hand, but essayed to oppress them by little and little, by craft and policy: for the prophet has borrowed the saying out of Moses himself. And it is expressed on purpose, lest we might think that the hearts of the ungodly are suffered to work our destruction without restraint. This surely ought to suffice us, that whatsoever the wicked and the devil practice against us, yet God represseth their attempts. But it is a double strengthening of our faith, when we hear that not only their hands, but also their hearts and minds are held fast tied, so that they cannot purpose anything otherwise than God listeth.

26 *He sent Moses, &c.*] Here the prophet briefly touches upon the things that are worthy to be noted in the people's deliverance. If the Egyptians had willingly suffered the

people to go their way, there had been no need neither of Moses's service nor of miracles. God, then, disposed that deliverance after such a sort, that it could not be denied that he was the author of it. He calls Moses the Lord's servant in this respect, that we might know he was not chosen by himself, nor attempted anything of his own head, but executed the charge committed to him, so far forth as he was the minister of God. The same is expressed more plainly in the person of Aaron, when he is said to be chosen. And what is attributed to each of them, agrees with both, and therefore the sentence must be explained thus; that God sent Moses and Aaron his servants, not because they were fit for it of themselves, and that they offered their service of their own freewill, but because he chose them. And this place teaches, that all who bestow their service to the behoof of the church, are not prepared by their own exclusive efforts, or framed to it by their own talents, but moved thereto by God. Moses was a man of heroic virtue: but, estimated in himself, he is nobody. And therefore the prophet will have all ascribed to God, that is spoken as well of him as of Aaron; and thus, whatsoever men bestow or employ to the welfare of the church, is doubtless the free gift of God.

27 *They set forth, &c.*] First the prophet glances lightly at those things which are declared by Moses more at large, and in more words. Nor does he go through the series of events continuously, because it was enough for him to shew that the said deliverance was the work of God. And once again he puts a difference between the power of God, and the service of Moses and Aaron. For he says that these men did indeed shew forth the miracles, but the miracles themselves proceeded from God, so that the heavenly power appeared manifestly in the hand of them. Afterwards he mentions one particular, which, notwithstanding, was not the first in order, but yet such as that it is easy to gather from it that God was the author of the deliverance, considering that the whole course of nature was changed in it; as nothing is more astonishing than to have darkness turned into light. In the second member he commends the faithfulness of Moses and Aaron, because they stoutly executed whatsoever God had committed to them; as if he should say, there was the most perfect harmony between the command of God himself, and the obedience of both his servants.

29 *He turned the water, &c.*] How sore a plague this was to the Egyptians, one may conjecture hereby, that the element of water is one of the two foundations of life. And God's power shone forth the brighter in that though the

country of Egypt is watery of itself, yet were the Egyptians parched with drought amidst abundance of water. Afterwards he says *there were frogs brought forth*, which passed even into *the kings' chambers*, whereby God avouched himself to be the author of the miracle. For though all Egypt swarmed with frogs, yet ought the kings' courts to have been free. And by the name of *kings*, he denotes either the nobles of the realm, or else the king's sons, who were brought up in the hope of the crown. For we know that at that time there reigned but one king over all Egypt. Hence we may gather how easily, and that not without scorn, God subdueth those that pride themselves in the flesh. For he gathered him not an army to fight with the Egyptians, neither did he forthwith arm his angels, or thunder out of heaven, but brought forth frogs, which disdainfully trampled upon the stateliness of that scornful nation, by whom we know the whole world was despised. It had been honourable for them to have sunk under the hand of strong enemies, but now to yield to frogs, what a dishonour was it! But so was it God's will to shew by proof that he needeth not powerful hosts to destroy the ungodly, because he can do it even in sport, whenever he list.

31 He spake, and there came a swarm of flies, and lice in all their borders.

32 He gave them hail for rain, and a flaming fire in their land.

33 And he strake their vines and their fig-trees; and tare down the trees in their borders.

34 He spake, and there came the grasshopper, and the caterpillar without number,

35 And ate up all the grass in their land, and wasted the fruit of their ground.

36 And he smote all the first-born in their land, even the beginning of all their strength.

37 And he brought them forth with silver and gold; and there was none feeble among his tribes.

38 Egypt was glad of their departing: for the fear of them was fallen upon them.

31 *He spake, and there, &c.*] By the word *spake*, he shews that the flies and lice came not forth by chance. And we know that this word was spoken by the mouth of Moses, because though God could have commanded by himself, yet did he interpose Moses as his spokesman. Not-

withstanding, God gave no less efficacy to his word when he commanded it to be uttered by a man, than if he himself had thundered from heaven. For when the minister pours out nothing unadvisedly, but executes his commission faithfully so far forth as he is God's instrument, the inward power of the Spirit is joined with his outward voice. And here again it is to be noted that the Egyptians were subject to flies and lice, that God might subdue their stubbornness to their greater reproach. When the prophet says that their rain was turned into hail, he means that the hail came with such appalling violence, as could not be attributed to nature. And it is likely that Egypt is less subject to this annoyance than other countries. Or rather, it does not often receive rain, but is watered with the Nile, and therefore it was so much the more strange to the Egyptians to have their country stricken with hail. Also to strike them the more in fear, God mingled fire with it. The hail, therefore, was mingled with a stormy whirlwind, that the Egyptians, who had hardened themselves against the other miracles, might notwithstanding, by force of fear, perceive that they had to deal with God.

34 *And there came the grasshopper, &c.]* This wasting of the fields could not be ascribed to fortune, because the grasshoppers came both upon the sudden, and also without number, so that they overwhelmed all Egypt. But the miracle was most evident in the word, as the foretelling of it removed all doubt. Therefore the prophet says expressly that the grasshoppers and caterpillars rushed in at God's commandment, as though soldiers should run to battle at the sound of a trumpet. Truly, whensoever these insects plague us and destroy the fruits of the earth, they are the scourges of God, but the prophet meant here to denote an extraordinary work of God. At length the prophet recites the last miracle which the angel wrought the night before the people's departure, in slaying all the first-born. I pass lightly over this story, as I do the others that went before, both because they have been treated of more fully heretofore, and also because it suffices at this time to know the prophet's meaning. Nevertheless, he enlarges this effort of God's power by repetition, saying that their first-born and the flower of their strength were destroyed. It is ill translated by some, *the beginning of their sorrow*. For as man's strength shews itself in generation, the Hebrews term the first-begotten *the beginning of strength*, as we have said in Gen. xlix. 3.

37 *And he led them out, &c.]* On the contrary part he commends God's grace, which preserves his chosen people



untouched, and safe from all plagues. If both parties had felt the plagues alike, God's hand had been the less notable. But now, seeing that among so many plagues they feel no inconvenience, this difference exhibits God's fatherly care towards his elect, as it were in a picture. In this respect he says *there was none that was feeble, or that stumbled* for the word *כַּעַל*, signifies either. Yet had I rather it should be taken simply, that whereas Egypt hasted to destruction, the people of God were in full vigour, and free from all diseases. When he says *he brought them forth*, and afterwards adds *in his tribes*, it is an altering of the number somewhat rife among the Hebrews. For though some refer the word *his* unto God, I am afraid it is too forced.

38 *Egypt was glad, &c.*] He sets out God's might by another circumstance, that the Egyptians were fain to let the chosen people go, when, notwithstanding, they meant nothing less. For though they wished them annihilated a hundred times, yet they thought they had the wolf by the ears, and so the fear of revenge made them more determined to blot out the memorial of that people. Whence it follows that it was a secret work of God's providence, that they laid aside their former mind upon the sudden. To the same purpose pertains that which he said in the last verse, *that they were brought out with gold and silver*. For the Egyptians could never have found in their hearts to strip themselves voluntarily, to enrich those whom they would have put to death with all their hearts. It was therefore the bounty of God, in whose hand and at whose disposal are all the riches of the world. And whereas he could by force have taken from the Egyptians the things he had given them, he bowed their hearts, so that they stripped themselves. *For the fear of them was fallen upon them*, is taken passively, for the Israelites feared not the Egyptians, but were terrible to them. Neither speaks the prophet of an ordinary fear, for a little before fear had driven them to cruelty and tyranny. But as even to that day they had endeavoured to shake off fear by obstinate wilfulness, God suddenly threw them down. Wherefore not without cause does the prophet reckon it as of God's wondrous works that he had quelled the violent fury wherewith the Egyptians boiled before, so that they let them go free, whom they had before determined to grind to powder with slavish works; as if he should make sheep terrible to wolves.

39 He spread out a cloud to be a covering, and fire to give light in the night.



40 They asked, and he brought quails, and filled them with the bread of heaven.

41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; and ran in dry places as a river.

42 For he remembered his holy promise to Abraham his servant.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness;

39 *He spread out a cloud, &c.*] He recounts certain miracles whereby God continued his grace towards his people in the wilderness. And the continual succession is worth noting; for to that incomparable work of deliverance, was added a notable confirmation, when God ceased not to become the guide of their journey. Therefore after they were passed the Red sea, he spread a cloud over them in the day-time, to defend the people from the heat of the sun; and in the night-time he gave them light by a pillar of fire, that even in the dark there might appear a bright token of his presence. Surely this perseverance was a rich avouchment of his continual love, as if he should openly shew that he had adopted the children of Abraham, to foster them under his protection, even to the end. That which follows concerning *quails*, is recited by the prophet to another purpose than in other places. I have no doubt that the bringing in of abundance of quails, for the people to fill themselves with the flesh of them, is to be ascribed rather to God's wrath, than to his bounty; even as we have seen them upbraided with it heretofore. But now, passing over their unthankfulness, the prophet sets forth God's continual loving-kindness towards them. Unless, perhaps, you like to take the word *ask*, in a bad sense, because the people besought not God with humility, but with their wonted intemperateness proceeded at once to murmuring, or rather insolently chided with God. Thus taken, it would be an amplification that God, departing from his own right, humoured even their unhallowed lust. Still, as the fault is not spoken of, let us suffer that to stand which is simplest, namely, that God's benefits, whereby he ratified the deliverance which he had once given, are heaped together. Afterwards it follows that *they were filled with the bread of heaven*, for so they term the *manna* by way of excellence, as we have seen heretofore. For whereas it is natural to have food brought out of the ground for us to feed upon, God then opened his hand wider to the Jews, to feed them from heaven. And as it was not enough for them to be refreshed

with meat when they were hungry, except God gave them drink also, he adds that the rock was opened, and waters flowed out of it through the dry places or the desert.

42 *For he remembered, &c.*] Again he alleges the reason why God dealt so lovingly with that people, and bare with them so gently, namely, that he might make good his promise; for he had covenanted with Abraham that he would become the God of his seed. And not without cause had the prophets so singular a care, to shew that the free covenant is the wellspring whence the deliverance and continual welfare of the people flowed. For thereby God's grace became the better known, seeing that nothing happened upon the sudden, but God only fulfilled that which he had promised four hundred years before. God, therefore, went before them with the lamp of his word, lest his grace and truth might be darksome. Therefore the prophet repeats again, that God was not led to deliver his people for any new cause, but that he proved the faithfulness and effect of his own covenant; just as if a man should dig up a treasure that he had buried in the ground. And there is no doubt the prophet meant to lead the faith of his countrymen yet further, namely, that all such as were yet to come might certainly believe that, as God had then proved the sure and substantial truth of his promise for many hundred years after, he would become none other than their fathers had found him in times past. And therefore he distinguishes by an epithet the word or promise, which still retained its force unimpaired after Abraham was dead. For when God had spoken it to Abraham, the force of the covenant died not with Abraham, but God shewed himself true towards his posterity.

43 *And he brought forth, &c.*] He makes mention of *joy* and *gladness*, that he may advance the greatness of God's grace the higher. For it was no small thing, that when the Egyptians were afflicted by sore and grievous means, when the whole realm was full of weeping and howling, yea, and when all houses were full of corpses, the people that just before were groaning for sorrow, or rather lay for dead, went out merry and joyful. And by calling them *God's chosen people*, he puts them in mind that it was not for their deserving, or for the worthiness of their race, that God was so favourable to them, but because he had adopted them; that there should be nothing left for men to glory in, but they should learn to glory in God only.

44 And he gave them the lands of the heathen :

and they took the labour of the nations in possession for their inheritance ;

45 That they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws. Praise ye the Lord.

44 *And he gave them, &c.*] He alleges the final cause for which God shewed his wonderful power so many ways in delivering his people, and ceased not to cherish and defend them in the wilderness, and gave them the land to enjoy, according as he had promised; that is, that they should wholly addict and give over themselves to the worshipping of him. And, doubtless, the end of election is this, that God will have a people upon earth, by whom to be worshipped and served. Moreover, that he may the better stir up the Jews to thankfulness, he extols the amplitude of the grace, saying that they had gotten into their possession the lands of the heathen, far and wide, and now held, as it were by right of inheritance, all that many people had gotten by great labour. For the plural number, as well in *the lands* as in *the nations*, adds to the glory of God's benefit. Furthermore, he defines briefly the manner of glorifying God, namely, that they should *keep the law*; for it were not enough to praise God's grace with their tongues, except earnest proofs of godliness were added thereto. And, as God rejecteth all counterfeit worship, there is but one only way to worship him aright, which is to keep his laws.

## PSALM CVI.

*This Psalm differs from the last ; for when he had shewn there that God was more than a beneficent father to his chosen people, that he might get himself pure worshippers in time to come, he now confesses that those notable benefits were ill-bestowed, because the Jews shook off his yoke from time to time, shamefully abusing God's grace, defiling themselves with many uncleannesses, and traitorously falling away from his word. And yet it is not so much a rebuke or complaint, as an acknowledgment with a view to obtain forgiveness. For the prophet begins with the praises of God, that he may cheer up himself, and others to be of good hope. Afterwards he makes a prayer that God should continue his blessing towards the flock of Abraham. Nevertheless, as the people were unworthy of further favour at God's hand, since they had so often departed from him ; after he has acknowledged that they had provoked God's wrath, even from the beginning from age to age, through their maliciousness, unthankfulness, pride, falseheartedness, and other vices, notwithstanding he craves pardon.*

1 Hallelujah. Praise ye the Lord ; because he is good : for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Who can express the mighty power of the Lord ? or shew forth all his praise ?

3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, *and* he that worketh righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O Lord, in the favour of thy people : visit me in thy defence ;

5 That I may see the bounteousness of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the joy of thy people, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

1 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] The exhortation is put as it were instead of a title ; not that the Psalm contains only a thanksgiving, or the praises of God, but that the people should gather assurance of reconciliation from past benefits, and so hope that God would be favourable hereafter although he were then displeased. Therefore in singing God's praises he bids them call such things to remembrance as may assuage the anguish of their present miseries, and lift up their hearts from despair.

2 *Who can express, &c.*] This verse may be expounded two ways : for if you read it jointly with the next, the meaning will be, that not all manner of men are meet proclaimers of God's praises, because the ungodly and wicked do but

blaspheme his holy name with their impure lips, according as it is said in Psalm l. 16; and so there would be added an answer to the question; which answer is this, *Blessed are they that keep judgment.* Notwithstanding, I am of opinion that the prophet's meaning is different; that no man living, how much soever he employ all his study and endeavour to set forth God's praises, is equal to so glorious an argument, the immensity of which overwhelms all the powers of our minds. Although his purpose in advancing God's mighty works so high, is not to deter us from proclaiming them, but rather by this means he exhorts us to strain ourselves beyond our power. For if, however vigorously we run, we always come far short of perfection, what place is there left then for slothfulness? But the best comfort to cheer us is that we know that howsoever ability fail us, the praises which we offer from our heart please God; only let us not be cold, for it were too much against reason that men who cannot attain to the tenth part, should take occasion therefrom to stop short in the hundredth.

3 *Blessed are they, &c.*] I distinguish this verse from the last, but so that it may in some sort cohere with it. For after the prophet has said that the immeasurableness of God's mighty works is such that all tongues are unable to set forth the praises of them, now also he adds that God liketh not the praises that sound from the lips only, except the heart agree with them, or rather there be a harmony in the whole life corresponding with them. And it is a short definition of godliness, when he bids men first *keep judgment*, and afterwards *to do righteousness*. For I doubt not but in the former part he denotes the pure affection of the heart, and afterwards comes down to outward works. For we know that righteous dealing is but as a shadow unless a man cultivate goodness in the heart. Also he requires perseverance, that no man should think himself discharged, saving he that is fully and steadfastly minded to hold on continually in the endeavour to live well and uprightly. For we see many throw out a sort of froth, and others shew some tokens of virtue, but not preserve an uniform course of conduct.

4 *Remember me, &c.*] By these words the prophet shews that his chief desire is, that God should extend to him the love wherewith he hath embraced his church, that by that means he might be partaker of all the blessings which God hath vouchsafed to his chosen children from the beginning, and which he continueth towards them from day to day. And yet he wishes not this for himself alone, but he makes a common prayer in the name of the whole church, that he may by his own example instruct the faithful to desire the

like. *Remember me*, says he, *in the favour of thy people*: that is, Extend the free favour which thou vouchsafest to thy people even unto me, so that I may not be separated from thy church, but be accounted one of thy people: for the favour of the people is taken passively for the lovingness wherewith God embraceth his chosen people freely. Nevertheless, the prophet by a metonymy transfers this word *favour* to the signs of God's love. For God's proof of his grace, by very deed, and by experience, flows out of the said fountain of free gift. Moreover, the prophet places the consummation of true happiness in this; if he may be reckoned among God's people: because by that means he will find God merciful to him, than which nothing is more to be desired; yea, and he will feel him liberal also. The word *remember* is referred to the circumstance of time: for in the close we shall see that this Psalm was composed when the people were in a sorrowful and miserable plight, inso-much that a misgiving might creep up in the faithful, that they were consigned to oblivion. To the same purpose pertains the latter member, *visit me in or with thy defence*: for God seems to visit those from whom he had in appearance withdrawn himself. And he subjoins the same sentence in the next verse; saying, *that I may see the bounteousness of thy chosen*: for he desires to be fellow and partaker in the bountifulness which God's chosen have always experienced. For *to see* is taken for *to enjoy*, as is well enough known; as, *to see the kingdom of God*, John, iii. 3, and *to see good life*, 1 Peter, iii. 10. For they are deceived who expound it, That I may see thee do good to the chosen; considering that neither the former verse, on which this depends, admits this sense, and also the sense which I have alleged is confirmed by what follows, namely, *let me rejoice in the joy of thy people, and glory with thine inheritance*. For it is apparent enough that the prophet wishes himself the participation of all good things with the elect, so that, holding himself content with the one God, he may live blessedly and happily under his protection. And though the church were in wretched case at that time, yet in that state of confusion the prophet holds to this principle, that nothing is better than to be reckoned among the flock and people of God, because he hath evermore been a most loving father to those that are his, and a faithful maintainer of their welfare. His only desire is to be dealt with after the same manner that God is always wont to deal with his church. At the same time there is an implied complaint, that God then withheld his goodness from his afflicted church, as if he had abandoned her.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have done amiss, we have behaved ourselves wickedly.

7 Our fathers in Egypt understood not thy wonders: they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; and rebelled at the sea, *even* in the Red sea.

8 And he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his power known.

9 And he rebuked the Red sea, and it was dried up: and he made them walk in the deeps, as in a wilderness.

10 And he saved them out of the hand of the enemy, and delivered them from the hand of the foe.

11 And the waters covered their oppressors; not one of them was left.

6 *We have sinned, &c.*] Hereby it appears the more plainly, that though the prophet have spoken in the person of one man, yet he gave forth a common form of praying to the whole church, as he now takes to him the whole body thereof. And henceforth to the end of the Psalm, he gathers from the ancient histories, that their forefathers were always of a malicious and evil disposition, of froward manners, rebellious, thankless, and falsehearted to Godward; and he recognises in their posterity those who are not at all better, that upon putting forth this confession his prayer for pardon may be received. Inasmuch, then, as we are not meet to obtain pardon before we have condemned our own sins, and our own dulness shuts the gate against God's grace; worthily does the prophet in the sore and hard chastisement of the people, humbly confess their guilt, as though, if God should exact yet sorer punishment, he would justly do so. There is another cause also, for which it was profitable for the Jews to have their sins said before them. For if God chastise us at all sharply, presently we imagine that he hath forgotten his promises. But when on the contrary we are reminded that we do but receive the reward that we have deserved for our sins, therewith also we bethink us of the promises wherein God offereth his favour to us, if we heartily repent. Furthermore, he enhances the heinousness of the guilt by three words, that, as commonly comes to pass, their minds should not be lightly touched, but rather pierced through with sorrow. For we know how men are held entangled in their own vices, and how they bear with themselves, until constrained to earnest examination. Nay truly, even when the Lord citeth them to judgment, they do but



say formally in one word that they have sinned, and in the meanwhile hypocrisy holds their minds asleep. Therefore this accumulation of words is not superfluous, when the prophet says that *the people did amiss in sinning*, and became utterly ungodly and wicked. And surely, if each of us examine himself, we shall soon see that it is no less needful for us to be forced to true confession; because though we dare not acquit ourselves, yet there is none of us who could not find in his heart to seek evasions and subterfuges. In nearly the same manner does Daniel in his ninth chapter condemn the sins of himself and his countrymen. And it may be that the author of this Psalm followed his example. But we may learn from both of them, that the only way to pacify God, is to be rigorous censors towards ourselves. Also it is to be marked advisedly, that though these holy prophets had never fallen away from the fear and worship of God, yet they took upon them a common guilt with their countrymen, and that not from counterfeit modesty, but because they knew themselves to be infected with many corruptions; even as it is not possible but that, when vices prevail, and the sink of them overflows, the contagion must in some degree extend itself even to the best men. For they compare not themselves with the rest of men, but coming before God's judgment-seat, they see themselves unable to escape. And at that time ungodliness was grown so prevalent among the Jews, that it is no wonder though even the best and most upright of them were carried away as it were by the force of the tempest. So much the more detestable, then, is the pride of those who scarcely think they offend in the slightest degree, or rather, who fancy I know not what devilish perfection, as some fantastical people do at this day. Surely we must hold, that though Daniel (whom even the Holy Ghost avoucheth to be one of the holiest men, Ezekiel xiv. 14) kept himself under the fear of God, yet did not feignedly acknowledge the sins of himself and his countrymen, when he confessed them with heavy and severe denunciations of their abominable character before God. Truly he was not overwhelmed with the same flood as the common herd of men, and yet he knew he had gotten many spots. And furthermore, the prophet does not therefore allege the fathers, that he might by their pretence make his own fault seem the less; as many do, who when they are rebuked, make this their buckler, that they were so taught by their fathers, and their bad education is the cause of it; but rather he avouches himself and his countrymen to be in danger of sorer punishment, because from the very beginning, and as it were their early infancy, they never ceased to pro-

voke God's wrath against themselves more and more with new wickednesses. For so does he involve the fathers and the children together in manifold guilt.

7 *Our fathers, &c.*] Here he shews how the people, even immediately from the commencement of their deliverance, were unthankful to Godward, and behaved themselves rebelliously towards him. For he declares not the history of one time only, but his whole narrative tends to this, that the people never ceased from wickedness, although God strove against them with incredible goodness; whence it appears how untameable and desperate the depravity of that nation was. And first he finds fault with the people's madness, which was the cause of their unthankfulness. For he does not extenuate their guilt by the plea of simplicity, as men are commonly wont to do, but he reproves the foul and shameful blockishness of the people for being blind in matters so evident: for God's works were such, that even blind men ought to have seen them. Whence, then, came so gross ignorance, unless Satan had bereft them of their wits, so that they neglected God's miracles, which were able to move the very stones? Now when he adds that *they remembered not*, he better expresses that their ignorance was inexcusable; or rather, that their blindness proceeded more from wilful heedlessness than ignorance. For the cause of their ignorance was, that they buried the things which were evident enough of themselves. He adds how speedy their forgetfulness was, which avails to augment their crime. For it was monstrous, that not even the very beholding of things could stir up their minds. Hence it came to pass, that being yet scarcely gone out of Egypt, they daringly rose up against their deliverer, even in their passing through the sea. Truly it was not a year, nor a hundred years, that ought to have obliterated such notable wonders out of their hearts: what madness then was it, that they murmured against God even while the thing was actually occurring, as though he had betrayed them to their enemies to be butchered. The Hebrews call the arm of that sea where the people were conveyed over, the sea of Suph: some translate it *sedgy*, and will have the word שִׁטָּה to signify *sea-weed*: but whatever is its etymology, there is no doubt of the place. And it is likely that because the same place is full of rushes, therefore that name was given unto it.

8 *And he saved them, &c.*] The prophet subjoins what had been easy for any man to gather from the former sentence; namely, that the Israelites were preserved, not because they were worthy, but because God minded to provide for his own glory. Therefore, lest God might abandon his

own holy name to the reproach of the heathen, he surmounted that stop, and proceeded to accomplish the deliverance which he had begun. Moreover, the antithesis between God's name and men's deservings is to be noted, because God, having an eye to himself, findeth no cause at all in us why he should be moved to save us. Afterwards he describes the manner of saving, wherein appears yet better the inestimable goodness of God, which altered the order of nature for so froward a people's sake. In saying that *the sea was rebuked*, he sets forth God's almighty power, in that, by his only commandment or beck, he dried up the sea, bidding the waters retire, that there might be free passage for them between the heaps of waters that faced each other. And that he may extol the miracle, he uses a similitude, which in all likelihood was taken out of Isaiah: for in chap. lxiii. verse 13, he says, *Thou hast made thy people to walk through the deeps as a horse in the wilderness, that he might not stumble.* His meaning is, that the wonderful power of God was the cause that the people journeyed through the sea, as if it had been upon a dry plain. It may be, indeed, that the wilderness in which the people wandered had many deeps, and that their way was rough, with many hills and dales and rugged rocks in it. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted but that the prophet advances God's mighty working in the passage of the sea, which he increases with this comparison, that there was a level way through that deep sea. Also he confirms the miracle, where he says that their enemies were drowned. For whereas the sea gave free passage to the Israelites, and covered and swallowed up the Egyptians, so that not one of them escaped alive: whence came that sudden difference, but because God distinguished the one people from the other?

12 Then believed they his words; and sang his praise.

13 They hasted and forgot his works; and waited not for his advice.

14 And they lusted with concupiscence in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

15 And he gave them their request; and sent leanness into their soul.

12 *Then believed they, &c.*] It is not laid down here to their commendation, that *they believed God's word and sang his praise*; but their crime is doubled from this, that being convicted by such manifest proofs, they nevertheless soon

returned to their former mind, and began to rebel against God as though they had seen nothing. Surely this was inexcusable impiety, in one moment to bury the notable benefits which they had been forced to acknowledge. Therefore he says that the greatness of God's works compelled them to believe and praise God, even whether they would or no, to increase their traitorousness, because although their hardness were subdued, yet they soon after relapsed into their unbelief. But here arises a question. For seeing that true faith is according to the nature of the word, as the word is an uncorruptible seed, so is faith never quenched, although it chance to be overlaid. But there is a certain *temporal faith*, as it is termed by Mark, iv. 17, which proceeds not so much from the spirit of regeneration as from some changeable affection, and therefore vanishes immediately. Although the prophet does not here praise any willing belief, but rather a belief extorted by force: verily because men, whether they will or no, are by the feeling of God's power compelled to have some reverence of him. This place is to be marked; that they who have once submitted themselves to God, do not flatter themselves, but rather learn that the true trial of faith is, when they willingly embrace God's word, and steadfastly persevere in obeying it. And that he may reprove the lightness of the people, he says *they made haste*. For whereas some expound it, that *they took them to their journey in haste, and went apace to Marah*; they pass over too insipidly the emphatic expression of the prophet, whereby he finds fault with their headlong departure from the way, in that they believed but for a moment, and forgot God's works hastily: for they journeyed but three days from the Red sea, to Marah, and yet in the meanwhile they began to murmur against God, because they found not sweet waters. By the way it is to be noted here, which we have seen heretofore, that the only cause why men are so thankless towards God, is that they regard not his benefits. For if the remembrance of them were rooted in our hearts, it would be as a bridle to keep us in his fear. The prophet points out the peculiar manner of their transgression, namely, that they suspended not their desire till time convenient. For wonderful is the headiness of our lusts, insomuch that they scarce concede one day to God. For except he at once grants our request, we immediately fall into impatience, and consequently into despair. The people, then, were to blame in this; that they did not cast their cares upon God, nor calmly call upon him, and patiently abide till he granted their requests, but rushed forth with rebellious headiness, as though they minded to prescribe to God what he should do.

And, therefore, to make the fault of their hastiness more heinous, he uses the term *advice*; as though they, being but men, suffer not God to have any understanding, nor depend upon his counsel as it would become them to do; but will be more provident than is permitted them, and will rather rule God, than yield themselves to be ruled by his advice. Wherefore, lest we provoke God's displeasure, we must hold us to this principle, that we give God leave to provide for us in suchwise as he knoweth to be for our behoof. And truly, faith despoiling us of our own wisdom, holds us in hope and silence, until God accomplish his work; whereas the flesh always unseasonably anticipates the counsel of God.

14 *And they lusted, &c.*] He pursues historically the fault which he had briefly touched upon according to the duty of a teacher. Therefore, if any one should demand how they waited not for God's advice; he answers, because they gave a loose rein to their lusts: for the only way to rule them is, if God govern our affections, and be the umpire of them. So much the more, therefore, does it behove us to endeavour to bridle the excesses of lust, which naturally boils up in us. For he that suffers himself to covet more than is lawful, openly declares war against God, because all the lusts of the flesh run directly counter to God. *To tempt God* is, not to rest upon God's arbitrement, but to desire more than his will is to grant. And whereas God is tempted sundry ways, the prophet points out here but one of them; namely, that the people dared to bind God to the means that they themselves had devised; and so, despising the means which they ought to have embraced, imagined to themselves a new working of God in thiswise; If God will not feed us with flesh, we will not take him for our God. Yet had he given them food that might suffice them. And although God is not tied to any means, yet will he have our senses subject to the means that he hath ordained. As for example, though he be able to feed us without bread, yet will he have our life sustained with that food; which if we neglect, and dictate to him another means, we tempt his power.

15 *He gave them, &c.*] There is an elegant play upon the word מִן: for if י be put instead of ל, it will signify *pleasure*. The prophet, therefore, alluding to their longing, by a kindred word says, *that God sent leanness into their soul*; meaning thereby, that he indulged the people in their intemperate desire: so, however, as that those that loathed manna, reaped nothing but leanness. He seems also covertly to apply to the people, what we see daily to befall dainty and squeamish persons, especially when their stomach,

by reason of corrupt humours, cannot away with wholesome meats. For such long only for the most hurtful things: and the more they cram in, the more disease they contract, and so by little and little the very meat itself wastes them. The prophet, therefore, seems to transfer the faulty habit of the body to men's minds, and to compare the Jews to hecick subjects, who are never the better for their ravenous eating, but rather the worse, by reason of their consumption. The cause is, that God hath cursed the food which they desired excessively, that the ill effects of their transgression might humble them. But in that not even this corrected their stubbornness, their depravity shewed itself to be the greater. It is said in a common proverb, that fools become wise by receiving harm: then must they needs be mad, yea, and utterly incurable, who mended not even by compulsion.

16 And they spited Moses in the tents, and Aaron the holy one of the Lord.

17 The earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, and over-covered the tent of Abiram.

18 And fire was kindled in their assembly; the flame burned the ungodly.

19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped before the molten image.

20 And they turned their glory into the likeness of an ox that eateth hay.

21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and dreadful things at the Red sea.

16 *And they spited, &c.*] He touches briefly upon another transgression, but in which he sets forth matter both for himself and for others to muse long upon. For that the people were ingenious in provoking God's wrath, by devising new modes of sinning from time to time, ought to strike the greater fear into us. Moreover, when he says *they spited Moses and Aaron*; his meaning is, that they advanced themselves with their devilish pride against God, to shake off the yoke that he had laid upon them; according also as Moses said, Num. xvi. 11, *What am I and Aaron?* For seeing it was God's will to rule his people by them; to dislike this kind of government, was but to withstand the commission of God. Therefore under the word *spite*, there lies a weighty sense; that whereas God cherished the



Israelites gently and lovingly under his wings, yet, being not content with their lot, they kicked against him. To what end was all this outrageousness, but because, disdainful to have God to be their fosterer any longer, they are desirous to climb even above the clouds. Aaron is called *the holy one of the Lord*, in this sense, that we might know that as well he as Moses were equally identified with God. For under the person of the one, this title is given to them both, whereby the prophet signifies that they were set apart for that office by God. Dathan and Abiram, therefore, in disannulling this choice, make war not with men but God, because, as much in them lies, they dishonour the holy ones of God.

17 *The earth opened, &c.*] The heinousness of the crime might be discerned by the greatness of the punishment. But the prophet's intent was to blame the hardheartedness of the people, who were so far from being amended by plagues, when even the very stones ought to have been moved at God's so horrible vengeance, that they raged still more frowardly. Doubtless it was a terrible warning, that the earth swallowed up alive Dathan and Abiram, and all their accomplices; and that fire descending from heaven burnt them up, according as Moses said, Num. xvi. 29, *If any common thing befall them, believe not that God who reigneth in heaven, reigneth over you and me; but if this new and unwonted thing happen, that the earth open, then at least believe that I am sent of God.* But seeing that the Israelites, carried away by their own frantick mind, even then also rebelled against God, it appears that it was a malady of the worst kind, which could not be amended with so violent a remedy. And seeing that God's severity makes even the hypocrites afraid; it was a point of monstrous madness to fret and brawl against God, when he smote them so hard. If it be demanded why the prophet charges the whole people with the fault of a few, the solution is easy; because though but two were the chief ringleaders of the insurrection, who drew along with them two hundred threescore and ten seditious persons, yet it appears by the people's fretting and reviling, that they also were affected with the contagion. The punishment went no further than the captains and ringleaders of the wicked conspiracy, because it was God's will to mitigate it, and to spare the common people, who nevertheless had also been eager for innovation, so that all of them were weary of Moses and Aaron.

19 *They made, &c.*] Here he sets forth the most shameful backsliding of all, in that they forsook the service of the true God and made themselves a calf. Now though their intent



was to worship God after that manner, yet the prophet reproves their brutal stupidity, in that they fell down before a molten image, and represented God under the shape of an ox, that eats hay. For hence the prophet gathers that God is robbed of his due, and all his glory defaced. And truly so is it: for though the idolaters pretend a zeal of worshipping God, yet as soon as they shape to themselves a visible God, they renounce the true God, and wickedly forge themselves an idol. But he upbraids them with their wickedness the more severely, when he says, *after the likeness of an ox that eateth hay*, and places in contrast with it their honour or glory. For as God decked them with his glory, what insensibility was it to put in his stead not only an ox, but also the lifeless figure of an ox; as though there were any affinity between God, who createth all kinds of sustenance, and that gross beast, which feeds upon hay. Therefore we must mark the prophet's purpose; that when men hold not themselves within any ordinary superstition, but cast away all shame, and rush into too monstrous mis-worshippings, their blindness is the more shameful and detestable. If the people had made themselves a representation of God under the shape of man, that had been wicked and heinous, but much fouler was their blockishness to liken God to an ox. When men sustain their life by meat and bread, as they borrow the use thereof from dead creatures, they acknowledge how frail their state is. How much greater dishonour, then, is offered to God when he is relegated to brute beasts. Furthermore, the comparison of which we have spoken, enhances the crime: for what honour was it for the holy people to worship the lifeless figure of an ox for God? But God had vouchsafed to spread out his glory like wings upon the children of Abraham, to adorn them with the highest honour. They, therefore, by stripping themselves of it, exposed their own turpitude to the scoffs of the nations. And therefore Moses, in describing that crime of idolatry, uses the term of *nakedness*. If any except that the ark of the covenant was an image of God, I answer, that that symbol was given to the Israelites, not to fasten their minds upon, but rather to be a furtherance to the spiritual worship of God.

21 *They forgot, &c.*] The prophet once more repeats that the people did amiss, not only through ignorance, but also through wilfulness, because God had already manifested himself abundantly. Excuse is taken away, even from the blind, inasmuch as God appeareth manifestly in the workmanship of heaven and earth. But far more heinous is the offence of the Israelites; who, bidding adieu to God after he

had familiarly communicated himself to them, turn themselves to beastly superstitions: for there lies hidden a great force in these titles of commendation, that God had put forth his incredible might out of heaven to save them. If he had uttered only some ordinary token of his power, yet ought such heed to have been given to it as might have held his people in the fear and service of him. But now that his workings were very notable, or rather, terrible and strange, it was too foul a shame for the people to run headlong into idolatry with closed eyes. For by that notification of God, all inventions and wicked wanderings ought to have vanished, even as darkness is dispelled by the refulgence of the sun.

23 And he meant to have destroyed them, had not Moses his chosen stood in the breach before his face, to turn away his wrath, lest he should wipe them out.

24 And they held scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credit to his word.

25 And they murmured in their tents, and hearkened not to the voice of the Lord :

26 And he lifted up his hand against them, to destroy them in the wilderness :

27 And to scatter their seed among the heathen, and to sow them throughout the countries.

23 *And he decreed, &c.*] By these words the prophet declares, that seeing God's vengeance was restrained only by prayer, the people perceived it was that they were wonderfully delivered from the destruction to which they were now so near; wherein their stubborn maliciousness betrays itself, as soon after they returned to their former mind. To express the soreness of God's displeasure, he says, *he meant or purposed to have destroyed the transgressors*: not that human passions are incident to God, that he should burn with anger for a moment, and afterwards, upon being pacified, alter his purpose; for God had in his secret counsel purposed to pardon them, even also as he did. But the prophet speaks of another purpose, whereby God meant to put the people in fear, that they might be humbled by acknowledging the grievousness of their offence. This is his repentance, whereof mention is made so often in the scriptures. Not that God is capable of turning, in himself, but because he is fain to put on the person of a man, to touch us seriously with the feeling of his wrath; as if a king, determined to pardon an offender, would notwithstanding

first make him appear at his judgment-seat, to display his own goodness the better. God, therefore, keeping his own secret determination to himself, uttered a decree, whereby he shewed that the people were bound under the guilt of eternal damnation. Afterwards he says that *Moses stood in the breach*; meaning, that he encountered God with his intercession, lest he should burst forth with extreme vengeance. And there is an allusion to the assaulting of cities: for if the wall be battered with a battle-ram, or other engine, valiant soldiers close up the breach, by setting their own bodies as a barrier. And therefore Ezekiel, xiii. 5, objects against the false prophets, that they are unlike Moses, who with their fair speech, making as it were a mud wall, do not put themselves forward at the breach in the day of assault. Some interpreters think the prophet alludes to the gap which the people had made among themselves by breaking God's covenant, and the holy unity; and it comes to the same meaning. For in the breach, the reason of the metaphor is this; that God, in defending the people by his protection, was to them as good as a wall and counterscarp. Again, in his anger he was rushing upon them to destroy them, had not Moses stept in between him and them.

24 *And they held scorn, &c.*] This was a manifest token of indomitable malice, that the Jews, after they had been appointed to destruction, being scarcely yet delivered from such great and imminent danger, murmur against God. And what was the cause of their murmuring? Their loathing of the Holy Land, than which nothing was more to be wished for. And the country of Canaan (which was predestinated to them, that they might be nourished in it as in God's fatherly bosom, and being separated from the heathen nations serve God purely; or rather, which was an earnest to them of the heavenly heritage) is, as well here as in many other places, called the *land of the longing*. How foul an unthankfulness, therefore, was it, to take scorn of that holy dwelling-place of God's chosen people! Besides this, the prophet points out the cause of their loathing; namely, that *they gave no credit to God's word*. For had they embraced God's promise with such faith as they ought, they would have been inflamed with so great a longing for that land, that they would have overleaped all obstacles. But now, because they discredit him, they not only refuse the heritage that was offered them, but also raise an uproar in their tents, as though they armed themselves against God.

26 *And he lifted up, &c.*] He describes another plague of God; the remembrance whereof ought so to have sunk

into their hearts, as to have made them look warily to themselves, by renewing their fear continually. But now, as all is to no purpose, it is manifest that the phrensy of that nation was incurable. God, indeed, at that time stayed himself from casting out their seed into diverse quarters of the world; but his threat alone ought to have been enough to bring their pride in subjection, if they had not been unmanageable. *To lift up the hand*, may be taken two ways in this place: for God is oftentimes in scripture said to lift up his hand to punish. Still, as it is admitted by almost universal consent, that the prophet speaks of swearing, I willingly incline to the same. And the ceremony of lifting up the hand, as though they summoned God out of heaven, was usual with them: therefore it is improperly applied to God, whose highness surpasses all things, and cannot swear by a greater than by himself, as the apostle says, Heb. vi. 13. Notwithstanding, he borrows this from common custom of men, as he does many other things. Horrible, therefore, had the scattering of the people been, if the possession of the Holy Land had not been retained by the prayers of Moses.

28 And they joined themselves to Baal-peor, and ate the offerings of the dead.

29 And they provoked him to anger with their works; and the plague brake in upon them.

30 And Phinehas stood up and executed justice: and the plague was stayed.

31 And it was imputed to him for righteousness, from generation to generation for ever.

28 *And they joined themselves, &c.*] He records that the Jews, after the denunciation of such horrible punishment, nevertheless immediately fell into fresh apostacy. Some think they are indirectly reprov'd for being deceived by the enticements of women, and for falling away to the superstitions of the Midianites. And surely that was the purpose of Balaam, when he saw that his tongue was tied up by God so that he could not curse the people. For he counselled king Balak to set maidens before the people, to entice them to strange worship by their blandishments; Num. xxxi. 16. Forasmuch, then, as the idolatry whereof mention is made here, had its beginning in illicit amours, some interpreters are of opinion that the prophet doubles the people's sin by this circumstance; that besides their entangling themselves with women, they contracted also another bond with Baal-peor. Howsoever the case stands, the prophet inveighs against the

falseheartedness of his own countrymen, for breaking off their spiritual wedlock by falling away from the true worship of God. For we know that as God taketh his church for his wife, when she gives herself to idols, she no less shamefully breaks her faith, than if a married woman should leave her husband, and humble herself to adulterers. It is well enough known that Baal-peor was the idol of the Midianites: but why he was named so, is not fully agreed. Truly **לַעֲלֹ** imports as much as *a patron*; and because **פָּתַח** signifies *to open*, some interpret it *the God of opening*: and they add that the cause was, that they bared their privities before him, which I dare not admit as certain. And it may be that it is the name of some place, as we know that often the heathen gave their idols names from their countries. Now understand we the prophet's meaning; that the Jews divorced themselves wickedly from God, to defile themselves with the company of Baal-peor: and he enhances their shamefulnes yet more, in saying, *they ate the sacrifices of the dead*; whereby he means the things that were offered to the idols; whereas heretofore they were wont to eat of the sacrifices that coupled them to the true God, who is the exhaustless fountain of life. So much the more shameful, therefore, was the exchange, when they wilfully gave themselves over to death by their wicked traitorousness. And we know that feasting was as it were an appurtenance of worship: and thus they got this by their sacrifices, that bidding adieu to the true God, they joined in wedlock with the dead: and therefore he loads them with double infamy; not only that they bowed the knee before Baal, and slew sacrifices to him, but also that they *ate* in his sacrifices.

29 *And they provoked, &c.*] Again he declares that they were warned by a new plague; that it may appear that God was always a sore avenger of his own glory in chastising his people; but without profit, because no plagues amended them. And as he said just now that God was appeased at the prayer of Moses, so now he says that the plague was stayed or healed by the benefit of Phinehas. Some translate the word **לָלַץ** *to pray*. But the other sense (that is to say, *to execute justice*) suits the place better; namely, that he prevents God's wrath by his zeal in executing justice upon the whoremonger and the whore. *He stood up, therefore*; that is to say, he rose up, or he set himself against it, when all others forbore in supine listlessness. Seeing, then, that the Jews perceived the plague assuaged by the service of one man, so much the less excusable was their wilfulness, that they did not even thus cease to sin. And we must understand, that all these things are spoken to us. For though

God from time to time chastise us, or allure us to repentance by others' examples, where is there one that is the better for his correction? Furthermore, it is worth noting that the plague ceased from the time Phinehas had executed justice; that we may know that the best remedy to quench the fire of God's wrath is when the sinner himself willingly performs the office of a judge in punishing himself; according as Paul says, 1 Cor. xi. 31; *If we would judge ourselves, truly we should not be judged of the Lord.* And surely it is a singular privilege, when God committeth to our hand the judgment of ourselves, to take punishment of our own sins. At the same time, it is to be noted, that the plague was stayed at that time by the punishment of one man, because the people then abhorred the wickedness with which they had acquainted themselves.

31 *And it was imputed, &c.*] By the praise of one man, the prophet brands the whole body of the people. For from the encomium wherewith the Holy Ghost vouchsafeth to honour that notable deed of Phinehas, we gather how detestable was the turpitude of the people. For the honour rested not upon him alone, but also ennobled his whole stock for many generations. Therefore, for the greater reproach, Phinehas alone is contrasted with the whole people. Still it is demanded how the zeal of a private person was allowed of God, seeing he took the sword in hand and executed justice being not called thereunto. For he seems to have adventured upon the matter unadvisedly. I answer, there were in the saints, certain singular and extraordinary impulses, which may not be tested by the common rule. When Moses slew the Egyptian, Exod. ii. 12, though he were at that time called, yet as the power of the sword was not yet given to him, it is certain that he was moved to that attempt by the secret inspiration of God. The same sort of impulse was in Phinehas; for though no man thought him armed with God's sword, yet was he well assured in himself that authority was granted him by God. And so it is to be noted, that the usual manner and order of calling which God useth is no hindrance, but that when God listeth he may also govern his elect with the secret motion of his Spirit. But there remains yet a harder question; how that one deed was imputed to Phinehas for righteousness. Paul, Rom. iv. 2, proves that men are justified only by faith; because it is written, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.* The same word uses Moses in the said place. Now if a man may make exception on the contrary part concerning works, then will Paul's reason be not only weak, but frivolous. First, we must see whether Phinehas



achieved righteousness by that one work. Truly, the law thought it could justify, yet does not promise salvation to each work by itself, but makes righteousness consist in the perfect observing of the commandments. It remains, therefore, that we say that Phinehas's work was imputed to him for righteousness, according as God imputeth the works of the faithful to them for righteousness; not in respect of their intrinsic desert, but of his own free goodness. For seeing that the perfect observing of the law alone, which is not anywhere found, is righteousness, all men must needs lie prostrate before God's judgment-seat. Moreover, each one of our works, if they were put to the test, would be found spotted with some blemish. There remains, therefore, but one only refuge, and that is in the free mercy of God. Furthermore, not only we ourselves attain righteousness freely through faith; but also, as the moon borrows her light from the sun, so also does the same faith make our works righteous, because the defects of them being once put away, they are accounted for righteous. In a word, it is only faith, and not desert, that procures the title of righteousness, as well to persons as works. I now return to Paul. It is not upon one word only that he reasons that we are justified freely and by faith only: but he assumes higher principles, which I have glanced at already; that is, that all men are void of righteousness, until God reconcile them to him by the blood of Jesus Christ; and then, that the means to obtain forgiveness and atonement, is faith, because righteousness of works is not to be found anywhere. Wherefore he justly concludes, that we are justified by faith alone. To this righteousness of faith, the righteousness of works is as it were a subaltern species, as they say; which works deserve no reward, but only of the mere goodwill of God, so far forth as he accounteth us for righteous.

32 And they provoked him to anger at the waters of strife, and it fell out amiss to Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they vexed his spirit, so as he spake with his lips.

34 They destroyed not the nations that God had commanded them:

35 But were mingled with the heathen, and learned their works.

36 And served their idols; and those were their decay.



37 And they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils.

38 And they shed guiltless blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan : and the land was defiled with blood.

39 And they were stained with their own works, and went a whoring after their own inventions.

32 *And they provoked, &c.*] He relates a new fault, that *they quarrelled with God at the waters of strife*; whence the place took its name. For though the quarrel were taken up directly against Moses, yet, if the case be rightly weighed, they murmured in fact against God. And to set their fault in a more heinous light, he says that *Moses was punished for their sakes*. And hence is gathered the grievousness of the crime, that God spared not even his own most elect servant. True it is, that Moses was worthy of that punishment; but if we seek for the wellspring of the fault, it was the sin of the people that redounded upon him. Now if Moses were deprived of entering into the Holy Land because he was drawn away to sinning through other men's default, contrary to his own purpose, how much less tolerable is the wickedness of the people, who quarrelled with God deliberately, and through their wilfulness drew Moses to a participation in their guilt.

33 *For they vexed, &c.*] מרר signifies properly *to vex*; but as it is put in the conjugation Hiphil, some take it transitively, That the people made Moses to rebel; which I dislike not. Notwithstanding, I subscribe not to the opinion of those that will have the particle ל to be a sign of the dative case, as though Moses should be said to have rebelled against God's spirit; for the prophet would not have spoken so sharply of an unadvised fall and an oversight. But that which I have stated already suits very well; namely, that seeing God was so severe with Moses, who had been, as it were, violently forced to sin by the furiousness of the people, the chief authors had sinned far more grievously. The prophet, however, teaches by the way, that though Moses were punished for the people's sake, yet was he not without fault; because, though his impatience took its beginning from the people's mutiny, yet ought he to have stood more steadfastly. He adds, that he *spoke with his lips*; which I refer to Moses. For less likelihood has the conjecture of those who expound it, that the punishment was denounced in express words. For he rather declares that the spirit of

Moses was so violently ruffled, that he murmured openly against God. The prophet, therefore, gives us to understand, that whereas Moses was of a tractable and meek disposition, he was stirred up by the people, as it were by a fan, so that even he also spake unadvisedly, saying: *Can God give you water out of the rock?* Num. xx. 10. For he had conceived so great a displeasure in himself, that he did not hear God's commandment calmly.

34 *They destroyed not, &c.*] They appear to me to err, who think the prophet relates that a punishment was simply laid upon the Jews; as though he did but upbraid them, that they themselves were to blame, that *they destroyed not the nations*, because they were unworthy of any more victories. For the prophet rather charges them with a new crime, that they were slack in driving out the heathen, or rather, that they refused to obey God in ridding the land of them. And now had the Amorites filled up the measure of their iniquity, so that it was not for nought, that God would have them cut up by the root, specially lest their company might infect his holy people. For God, in choosing that land for his own dwelling-place, meant to have it holy and undefiled by any impurity. The people, therefore, in refusing to execute the vengeance enjoined them, shewed that they desired defilements themselves. And, therefore, we see how sore God's displeasure was kindled against them for this their apathy. Behold, saith he, I gave commandment that all these nations should be slain with the sword; and now, because ye have not obeyed me, they shall be thorns to you, they shall pierce through both your sides, and they shall prick your eyes, &c.; Num. xxxiii. 55. For though it were a sort of mercy not to slay them to a man, yet is not the people to be held excused for neglecting God's vengeance, and leaving the land subject to pollutions. And this is a thing to be noted, because men bear with themselves too much in either behalf, as well in being over-rigorous where there is no need, as also in defeating the ends of justice by an indolent lenity. We must, therefore, depend solely upon God's command, that we deviate not from the right course on either side. For if the Israelites be condemned for sparing whole nations, what is to be said of judges, who, through their slackness and cowardliness towards a few, let loose the reins to wickedness, to the destruction of a whole realm?

35 *But were mingled, &c.*] He describes the fruit of that untoward commiseration; namely, that they entangled themselves in the defilements of the nations whom they had spared. If they had inhabited the land alone, it had been easier for them to have held still the pure worship of God.

But now it is no marvel though they grow out of kind, being allured thereunto by their neighbours, for we are over-prone to follow bad examples. And now he speaks of the posterity of those who had so often provoked God to anger in the wilderness. And yet he shews them to be not a whit better than their fathers, because in the generation that succeeded, the same unbelief, rebellious spirit, and unthankfulness raged. Moreover, this mingling of themselves with the heathen was an open rejection of grace. For as God had chosen them on condition that they should be separate from the heathen nations, they by their indiscriminate mingling of themselves with them, as much as in them lay, brought this sanctification to nought. When he adds *that they learned the works of them*, he warns us that nothing is more pestilent than the company of the ungodly, because, such is our proneness to sin, it cannot be but the infection must soon creep further when we are living among corruptions. Wherefore we must use singular heed and wariness in this behalf, that the wicked tincture us not with their sinful manners when they are familiar with us, and especially where there is danger of idolatry, to which every man's own nature inclines him. What, then, will be the case when incitement from without pours fresh oil upon the fire? The prophet, therefore, declares that the Jews became the scholars of the heathen, so that they gave themselves over to their superstitions. And he uses the word *serve*, by which is refuted the childish quibble of the papists, when they make excuse that they honour images with the adoration of service (*dulia*) and not of worship (*latria*). But if it be lawful to serve images, the prophet does amiss to find fault with his own countrymen for serving strange gods. Contemptible, therefore, is that distinction, that God is to be honoured with worship, and images with service. He repeats that this issued *to their decay*, that it may the better appear that they adhered stubbornly to their errors, despising God's scourges.

37 *And they sacrificed, &c.*] The prophet points out one sort of superstition wherein the monstrous blindness of the people appears; namely, that they did not shrink from sacrificing their sons and daughters to devils. He uses an odious name on purpose to make the people's fault the more detestable. Whereby we gather how fond the pretence of unadvised zeal is. For the hotter the Jews were the more wicked the prophet shews them to have been, because their madness carried them so far that they spared not even their own children. Doubtless if good intent were of any value in such sort as idolaters surmise, it had been a work worthy

of singular commendation to forget all the affections of nature in slaying their own children. But when men are impelled by their own caprice, the more they busy themselves the more they increase their fault. For what difference was there between Abraham and those whom the prophet mentions, but that he addressed himself to offer up his son in sacrifice through obedience of faith; and these are carried headlong by madbrained zeal to lay aside the affection of humanity, and rage against their own blood!

38 *And they shed, &c.*] He inveighs still more sharply against that madness of theirs in defiling the land with guiltless blood by slaying their own children. For if any object that Abraham is praised because he spared not his only-begotten son, the solution is easy; that inasmuch as he obeyed God in the purity of faith, all stain of cruelty was wiped away. For if obedience be better than all sacrifices, 1 Sam. xv. 22, it is the best rule of piety and well-doing. But it is a horrible token of God's wrath, when being given over only to their own superstitious devices, they harden into beastly cruelty. As often as the martyrs spend their lives for the maintenance of the truth, the savour of this sacrifice is sweet in God's sight. But when, like Decius, men devote themselves unto death in an execrable manner, it is unutterable treason against God. Not without cause, therefore, does the prophet enhance the people's offence with this circumstance, that monstrous cruelty followed their perverse worship. Neither is it without cause that he upbraids them with defiling the land out of which God had commanded the old inhabitants to be cast, that he might have some peculiar place for his worship to dwell in. Doubly wicked, therefore, are the Israelites, who defraud God, and in a manner disappoint him of his right, not only by defiling the land with their superstitions, but also by cruel murdering of their own children.

39 *And they were stained, &c.*] He concludes now, generally, that the Jews were covered with every kind of pollution when they fell into the manners of the heathen, because in all the inventions of men there is nothing but filthiness. For by *men's works* he means all counterfeit worshippings, which they devise to themselves without God's warrant; as if he should say that the true holiness of God's service issues out of his word, and whatsoever men obtrude and intermix of themselves, is unholy, and infects God's service with the stench of it. Doubtless the intent of the Israelites was to serve God, but all that they gained by their zeal was that the Holy Ghost avoucheth them to have been abominable to God with the stench of their defilements and

their whoredoms. For spiritual chastity is, to adhere entirely to God's word.

40 And the wrath of the Lord burned hot against his people, and he abhorred his own inheritance.

41 And he gave them up into the hands of the heathen ; and their enemies were lords over them.

42 And their enemies subdued them, and they were afflicted under their hand.

43 Many times delivered he them ; and they provoked him in their devices, and were brought down in their own sin.

44 And he saw when they were in distress, by hearing their cry :

45 And he remembered his covenant towards them, and it repented him according to the multitude of his mercies.

46 And he gave them favour in the sight of all them that led them away captive.

40 *And the wrath, &c.*] The severity of the punishment confirms what I said just now, namely, that it was no light offence that the people durst corrupt the service of God. But the people themselves betrayed their incurable naughtiness the more, in that not even all this could call them back to true repentance. Doubtless it was a horrible vengeance, that the people which was his holy and chosen heritage was given up to the lust of the heathen, who, notwithstanding, were but slaves of the devil. Then at least ought they to have loathed their own wickednesses, by means whereof they had been cast into those extreme miseries. The prophet, therefore, enhances the indignity by saying that *they were subdued and afflicted by their enemies*; and so much the more shameful was their folly, that by such reproaches they were not truly and heartily humbled under the mighty hand of God: for they had been warned recently by Moses, that they were not cast into that oppressive thralldom by chance, or by the might of their enemies, but because they were given over, and as it were sold by God himself. And it was a most rightful vengeance that those who had rejected the yoke of God, should be given up to be harassed and oppressed by tyrants; and that those should be cast under their enemies' feet to be trodden upon, who could not find in their hearts to be ruled by the fatherly government of God.

43 *Many times, &c.*] As the impious obstinacy of the people has been betrayed, in that it could not be corrected, no not even with the severest scourges, so now the prophet, on the other hand, reproves their wicked hardness of heart, in that no benefits could bow them to obedience. It appears, indeed, that they groaned under the burden in time of their afflictions; but when God not only assuageth their punishments, but also wonderfully delivereth them, is their backsliding afterwards to be excused? And we must remember that the disposition of all mankind is here set before us as it were in a glass; for though God essayeth both methods to bring back almost all men into the way, how few are there that continue not the same as before. And if he either bruise us with his scourges, or soften us with his goodness, the effect is but momentary; for presently we tumble back again into the same vices, yea, how often soever he lay punishment upon punishment, or mercy upon mercy. As for the Jews, truly their lack of understanding and insensibility was intolerable, considering that after so many deliverances they ceased not from their backslidings. For the prophet says that they grieved God nevertheless with their wicked inventions. Afterwards he repeats that they were paid their due reward, because they were overwhelmed in their own sinfulness. And again he declares that their groanings were heard, though they were most worthy of so many calamities; whereby we gather that he strove against their naughtiness with unwearied goodness. For how merciful was it to hearken to the cry of those who had shut their ears against his wholesome doctrine, and had been deaf to all his chidings and threatenings! And yet could not all this perseverance of his cure their devilish phrensy.

45 *And he remembered, &c.*] He assigns the cause of so great gentleness and forbearance, namely, that God was mindful of his covenant. Whereby not only free forgiveness is denoted, but also there is touched their froward blindness who were not brought back by such remedies to the covenant in which they saw their whole welfare placed. But chiefly he upbraids them with unthankfulness, that whereas they deserved to be exterminated, they did not acknowledge that they were saved by the mercy of God. Which he confirms better in the next member, saying that God spared them *according to the greatness of his compassions*. For seeing God must needs lay open the mighty treasures of his goodness in delivering them, thereby is gathered what they have deserved. By the word *repent* there is not denoted any alteration in God himself, but only in the punishments themselves. For God, in mitigating the punishments



or withdrawing his hand from executing his judgments, seemeth after a sort to alter his purpose. And therefore the scripture, accommodating itself to our rudeness, speaks according to our understanding.

46 *He gave them favour, &c.*] As he had said erewhile that the Jews had been delivered into the hands of their enemies because the wrath of God alone had armed their enemies to bring them under subjection, so now he says that God had softened their said enemies, who heretofore had by direful means executed his vengeance. Inasmuch, then, as men's hearts are ruled by God's hand, so that he may either fire them to cruelty, or bend them to gentleness as often as he thinketh good: as long as his displeasure burned against his people, their enemies also were inflamed with implacable hatred. But as soon as he was pacified, not only that fire which issued out of the furnace of his judgment was quenched, but their cruelty was turned to commiseration. For it had been an incredible conversion, that fierce and cruel enemies should begin to love and pity those whom they had hated before, unless they had by God's providence been made lambs from being wolves.

47 Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to set forth the renown of thy holiness, and to glory in thy praise.

48 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.

47 *Save us, &c.*] It appears by this clause that the Psalm was made under the miserable and sorrowful dispersing of the people. And although there were not any notable prophets among the people after Haggai and Malachi, yet is it likely that some of the priests were endued with the spirit of prophecy, at least to administer needful comfort to the people. I am certainly of opinion that after the people were dispersed again by the tyranny of Antiochus, this form of praying was applied to their existing necessity, wherein the people, calling to mind the ancient histories, might acknowledge that their fathers had provoked God's wrath innumerable ways since he had delivered them. For it behoved the people to be humbled indeed, lest they should murmur against God's chastisement. And seeing that God had spared them, being unworthy of it, there was hope of pardon given for the time to come, if they sought atonement from the heart; especially considering that the memorial of the



covenant is celebrated here, upon assurance whereof it was lawful for them to call upon God though he were displeased. And as God had chosen them for his peculiar people, they beseech him to restore the lacerated members to one body, according to the prophecy of Moses, Deut. xxx. 3, 4; *If thou be scattered asunder to the four quarters of the world, I will gather thee together from thence*; which was fulfilled when the multitude that was dispersed hither and thither grew together into unity of faith. For though the people never recovered their earthly kingdom and polity, yet was this a more happy gathering together, that being grafted into the body of Christ, wheresoever they dwelt they were knit together among themselves, and also with the Gentiles, by the holy and spiritual bond of faith, so that they made but one church dispersed through the whole world. They add the end whereto their deliverance serves; which is, *to set forth God's renown*, and to exercise themselves in his praises.

48 *Blessed be the Lord, &c.*] Here he so tempers the desires of the people, that the miserable captives even in the midst of their groanings may not cease to give thanks to God; which circumstance must be marked advisedly, because when we are pinched with adversity, scarce the hundredth person of us resorts calmly unto God, but either by presumptuous praying or peevish complaining we betray our pride. But the only way to intreat God is to submit ourselves with meek heart to his rod, bearing patiently the cross that he layeth upon us. Therefore not without cause does the prophet exhort the afflicted exiles to praise God, although he chastise them somewhat sharply. Whereto pertains also this portion, *Let all the people say, Amen*; as if he should bid them all to subscribe to God's praises, although both publicly and privately they were worn out with heartrending distresses.

## PSALM CVII.

*First, he teaches that human affairs are not whirled about by the blind rotation of fortune, but that in the various vicissitudes which the world imputes to chance, men must have an eye to God's judgments. And therefore that all adversities, and whatsoever miseries men endure, as shipwrecks, dearths, banishments, sicknesses, and overthrows in war, are so many records of God's wrath, whereby God citeth men as offenders to his judgment-seat. And that all prosperous and joyful successes ought to be ascribed to his grace, so that he may always obtain the praise that he deserves, whether it be of a most merciful father or of a righteous judge. In the end, he inveighs against the worldlings, who blindfold themselves amid such evident proofs of God's providence.*

1 Praise the Lord, because he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let the Lord's redeemed say, whom he hath delivered from the hand of the troubler.

3 Whom he hath gathered out of the lands, from the east to the west, from the north and the south.

4 When they wandered out of the way, in the solitary desert, and found no city to dwell in.

5 Both hungry and thirsty, so as their heart fainted in them.

6 And they cried unto the Lord in their distresses and he delivered them out of their troubles.

7 And he led them forth in the right way, that they might come to a city inhabited.

8 Let them acknowledge the Lord's mercy before him, and his wondrous works before the sons of men.

9 For he hath satisfied the greedy appetite, and hath filled the hungry person with good things.

1 *Praise the Lord, &c.*] This verse we have expounded already, for it was the beginning of the last Psalm. And it is manifest that it was not only very commonly used among the Jews, but also wont to be so intermingled with other Psalms, that when one set of singers sung a verse, the opposite set responded with another alternately, *Praise the Lord because he is good; for his, &c.* Therefore, whosoever was

the author of the Psalm, has set down here a common and frequently repeated sentence as a proem. Afterwards he comes down to the particulars. And first he exhorts those to thankfulness who were returned home safe from a distant and distressing journey, yea, and out of bondage and imprisonment. And such he terms *the Lord's redeemed*, because in wandering through deserts and pathless solitudes, they had often been prevented from returning, had not God as it were reached them his hand and made himself their leader. Nevertheless he denotes not here any manner of wayfarers, but such as either by force hostile, or by some other violence and necessity, were driven out into far countries, and had felt all extremities of danger; or rather, who had been prisoners among enemies, or pirates, or outlaws. He warns them, therefore, that they had not been driven about by chance, nor brought home into their country by fortune, but that their wanderings had been controlled by God's providence. And this second verse might be connected with the first, as though the prophet should bid those to whom he speaks rehearse that well-known song. But it will be read no less fitly by itself after this manner: Let the Lord's redeemed, who are returned after banishment out of captivity, come forth and take their part in the singing God's praises, and let them shew forth the grace of God which they have felt in their deliverance. Now, although that were a common thing among the Jews that had happened to undertake any long journeys, because they could scarcely stir out of their own land without encountering on all hands either rough and difficult ways, or ways that were full of various perils, yet extends this doctrine indifferently to all mankind. And it puts them in mind how often they were withdrawn from the right way, and had nowhere to lay their heads, which happens very often in places uninhabited. Nay, if any one enter a forest, if he be not acquainted with his way, he may sometimes in his wandering become the prey of lions and wolves. But he denotes those peculiarly, who being overtaken in desert places, are also in danger of starving for hunger and thirst. For it is certain that such are every hour in peril of death, unless the Lord succour them.

6 *And they cried, &c.*] The verbs of the preter tense denote here, as the grammarians term it, a continued act. The sense therefore is, that such as wander in desert places are often pinched with hunger and thirst, because they find no place to receive them, and when hope faileth them, then they cry to God. True it is that God succoureth many that are in peril, although they pray not to him. Neither was it the

prophet's purpose so much to praise the faith of the godly, that seek God with all their heart, as to describe the common feeling of nature. For though the hope of many men be not fixed upon God, yet when any great need presses them, they are drawn to God by a secret guidance. And by this means God forceth them to acknowledge that salvation is to be sought for nowhere but at his hand only. Nay, rather God compelleth the ungodly, who otherwise scoff at him when they live in pleasure and ease, to call upon his name even against their wills. It has been common in all ages for heathens, who make but a fable of religion, to cry to God when they are forced by necessity. Do they this in jest? Nay, rather they are forced by the secret instinct of nature to magnify God's name, which they had in derision before. The prophet therefore, in my judgment, shews here what is commonly wont to come to pass: that is, that men, though void of godliness and faith, and such as could find in their hearts to have nothing to do with God, are by the guiding and instruction of nature driven to call upon God, even without any definite thought of him, if they are put to any sore distress. Then seeing they flee so to God in doubt or extremity, this acknowledgment of theirs fully reproves their blockishness, in that they neglect God in time of quietness, because their own prosperity intoxicates them; and also in that though the seed of religion be sown in their hearts, yet they never learn to be wise; I mean, to be wise so as to remember that there is a God in heaven, till they are constrained by miseries. Neither is there cause why any one should allege that sarcasm of the ancient buffoon. For when he came into the church, and beheld the tablets that merchants had hung up there, wherein they acknowledged themselves to have been saved from shipwreck by the benefit of the gods, he was thought to remark facetiously and wittily, But the deaths are not numbered of those that have been drowned, the multitude of whom is countless. Perhaps he might well enough scoff so at the forged idols. But though a hundredfold more were drowned in the sea than escape safe to the shore, yet does not this darken the glory of God's goodness, who is in suchwise merciful, as that therewith he nevertheless executeth his judgments. The same is to be said of wayfarers that stray and wander in wildernesses. If many of them perish for hunger and thirst, if many are devoured by beasts, if many die of cold, doubtless even so many exhibitions of his judgment doth God set forth to us. Whereby we gather that the same thing threatens all men, were it not that God's will is to have some part of mankind preserved. And so, step-

ping in as a judge, he saveth some to testify his mercy, and in others he sheweth his rigour. Worthily, therefore, does the prophet add, that they are brought into the way by the hand of God that they may find convenient lodging, and therefore he exhorts them to thanksgiving. And that he may the better confirm God's benefit, he joins God's wondrous works to his mercy; as if he should say, God's grace is more apparent in this benefit than that it ought to be hidden; and that when they who are so delivered conceal it, they by their impious silence do no less suppress God's wonderful working than if they should go about to trample the light of the sun under their feet. For what else is to be said? Seeing that our very natural understanding draws us to God in the instant of danger, who will say that his glory is not overwhelmed by our malice and unthankfulness when we forthwith forget him.

10 They that dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, which are bound in misery and iron;

11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High;

12 When he humbled their heart with heaviness; then fell they down, and there was no helper.

13 They cried to the Lord in their distress, and he delivered them out of their troubles.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake the bands of them asunder.

15 Let them acknowledge the Lord's mercy before him, and his wondrous works before the sons of men.

16 For he hath broken the brazen gates, and burst the iron bars asunder.

10 *They that dwell, &c.*] The prophet mentions another sort of danger wherein God shews openly his power and grace in delivering men. The world, as I said, call these tossings the sport of fortune, and scarce one in a hundred leaves any room for God's providence. But the prophet requires another manner of wisdom at our hands; namely, that in all adversities we should consider God's judgments, and in the deliverance from them his goodness. For neither falls any man into the hands of enemies or of thieves by chance; neither is he saved from them by chance. But we

must hold us to the said principle, that afflictions are God's scourges; and therefore that there is no remedy of them elsewhere than in his favour. If a man, being taken by thieves or pirates, be not murdered out of hand, he lives but from moment to moment, yea, and that without hope of life; and therefore his deliverance is a warrant of God's favour, which shines so much the brighter as there are fewer that escape; so far from reason is it that the multitude of destructions should quench his praises. Wherefore the prophet condemns of ingratitude all who being thus wonderfully delivered, within a while after, quite forget the help that was ministered to them. And that he may the better reprove their fault, again he cites their own cries as witnesses against them. For seeing that in their distresses they professed without feigning that God was their deliverer, how comes it to pass that this knowledge vanishes away when they are in rest and peace?

11 *Because they rebelled, &c.*] By pointing out the cause, he corrects that unfounded error, that adversities happen by chance. For if God's judgments be considered, there is no room left for chance and fortune. Besides, till men are persuaded that miseries are laid upon them by God's appointment, they will never find in their heart to seek help at his hand. Moreover, the marking out of the cause tends not to this, that they whom the prophet speaks of should be accounted wicked as it were openly before the tribunal of men; but by these words he exhorts the afflicted to examine their own life truly, and though no man accuse them, yet to descend into themselves, where they may always find the cause of their miseries: neither says he simply that they had sinned, but that they had rebelled against God's word. Whereby he gives us to understand that the only rule to live well, is to follow that which God hath commanded. Whosoever, then, are held so convicted, if utter necessity enforce them to cry unto God, they are more than senseless if they acknowledge not their un hoped deliverance to come of God. For he speaks of brazen gates and iron bars to enhance the benefit; as if he should say, the bonds of everlasting slavery are broken.

17 Fools are afflicted for the way of their transgression, and for their iniquities:

18 Their stomach abhorreth all meat; and they are brought to death's door.

19 Then cry they to the Lord in their trouble; and he saveth them from their distresses.

20 He sendeth his word and healeth them, and riddeth them from all their corruptions.

21 Let them *therefore* acknowledge the Lord's mercy before him, and his wonderful works before the sons of men.

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of praise, and shew forth his works with rejoicing.

17 *Fools are afflicted, &c.*] He comes down to another kind of chastisement. For as erewhile he said that such as shake off obedience to God are delivered captive into the hands of men, so now he teaches that sicknesses are laid upon men by the hand of God for their sins. But when the sinner perceives himself to be chastised with God's rod, he will easily pass from thence to the knowledge of grace. And he calls those fools, who bring down destruction by following their own lusts unadvisedly. Not that they do amiss through ignorance and oversight only, but because their blind affections deprive them of right judgment, so that they consult most perniciously for themselves. And truly we must hold always to this principle, that the fear of God is wisdom. Whence it follows that they are carried away by folly and madness, who shake off the yoke of God to yield themselves thralls to the devil and to sin. And the prophet sets down *backsliding* or *transgression* as the principal part of folly; and afterwards adds *iniquities*, because when a man is once gone away from God, he must needs be continually haled hither and thither, so that he ceases not to heap sin upon sin. And he treats not here of common sickness or diseases, but of such as are accounted altogether, deadly and leave no hope of life remaining, whereby the grace of recovery may shine forth the better. For if a man be relieved when he is but somewhat ill at ease, he will not so well weigh God's hand in that light alteration, as when he stretcheth it out in some notable and apparent manner by restoring complete strength to such as were half dead. Therefore he says they are preserved from many corruptions in just the same manner as from many deaths. And hereto also pertain these circumstances, when the prophet says *that they are brought to death's door, and loathe all meat*. For of crying we have spoken already; namely, that when men are brought to utter distress, they acknowledge by crying out that their good days are at an end, except God succour them by wonderful means.

20 *He sendeth, &c.*] Again the prophet shews that he treats of deadly diseases which bring men to extremities,



when he says that they are delivered from utter destructions. However, he sets God's help against all worldly remedies; as if he should say, they recover life by the power of God alone, because it were impossible to find a physician upon earth. Also the manner of healing is to be noted; namely, that God by his only beck or commandment driveth all diseases, yea, and death itself, far off. For I restrain not this to the faithful, as many do. True it is that the healing of the body is of small effect, unless the soul be cleansed by the word of God. But the prophet desires to have God's mercy considered even in the reprobate and thankless. The meaning therefore is, that as diseases flow not in upon men by chance, nor proceed from natural causes only, but execute God's commandment as his apparitors, so also he healeth the same person whom he hath stricken without any ado, because it is enough if he do but command what he will have done. Nevertheless, now that we understand the prophet's mind, the application thereof will come in well in its proper place; that is, that if bodily diseases are not cured but by the word or command of God, much less are men's souls restored to life but by the word, and that taken hold of by faith.

22 *And let them, &c.*] The prophet adds this sentence in way of exposition, that he might the better express that God is defrauded of his right, except his providence be acknowledged in this behalf. Nature tells us that there is some kind of worship due to God, and heathen men also think the same thing, without a schoolmaster. And we know that the custom of sacrificing was always in use among all nations. Neither is it to be doubted but that God's will was to hold mankind in awe by that principle, as by some feeling of devotion. The prophet, therefore, calls back the senseless or over-listless to that point; giving us to understand that the true sacrificing is, when his bounty is acknowledged. And yet I deny not but he alludes to the ceremonies of the law. But as religion was observed through the whole world indiscriminately by sacrifices, he charges with ingratitude those who, when they are delivered from any danger, bury God's praise in silence.

23 They that go down into the sea in ships, using traffick in the great waters;

24 They see the Lord's works, and his wonders in the deep.

25 He sayeth the word, and raiseth the stormy wind, and lifteth up the waves of it aloft.

26 They mount up to the heavens, and sink down to the deeps; their heart melteth for sorrow.

27 They are tossed to and fro, and reel like a drunken man, and all their understanding is swallowed up.

28 And they cry unto the Lord in their distress; and he leadeth them out of their troubles.

29 He maketh the storm to stand still, so that the waves of them are calm.

30 And they rejoice because they are quieted; and he bringeth them to the coast where they wished to be.

31 Let them praise the Lord's mercy before him, and his wondrous works before the sons of men.

32 And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

*23 They that go down, &c.]* Here, in another sort, the prophet shews what great regard God hath of mankind when he bringeth shipwrecked persons to haven, as if he should raise them out of the grave to life. When he says that such as are accustomed to sailing see God's wonders in the deep of the sea, I do not interpret it generally of the manifold store of marvels wherewith the sea is fraught. True it is that such are meet witnesses of God's works, because there is greater abundance and diversity of incredible things there than upon earth. But I restrain it to the text following, because the prophet seems to expound himself in shewing how God suddenly raiseth and stilleth the tempests. The effect is this, that such as are seamen are tried to the quick with tempests; so that the very tossing of the sea threatens as many deaths as there are surges. But he paints God's providence still more graphically. For that we may know that the sea rages not of its own accord, he uses the word *say*; meaning that the winds blow to trouble the sea by God's providence and command. True it is that seamen anticipate coming storms from natural causes; but the sudden alterations come not but of God's secret appointment. Therefore he not only relates historically how tempests and whirlwinds arise, but as he sustains the character of a teacher, he begins with the very cause of them. Afterward she expresses the greatness of the peril, or rather, exhibits as it were the image of death in a picture,

that God's gracious goodness may shine forth in the happier issue. *They rise up*, says he, *to heaven, and sink down again to the deeps*: as if he should say, they shoot up so that their life vanishes away, and afterwards fall headlong down and are drowned. Also he adds the terrors which amaze their minds, or rather deprive them of understanding; meaning by these words, that however skilful the masters of ships that have the guiding of them may be, yet are they utterly bereft of understanding. Whence it follows that they are destitute of other helps, which would stand them in no stead though they had them at hand. For though they gather up their tacklings, cast their sounding-line into the deep, and turn their sails hither and thither, yet when they have tried all things, at last, when art fails, they resign themselves to drift before the winds. For despair leaves them no counsel. Therefore when there appears no comfort in the world, there remains nothing but crying, which proves them to have been as good as dead.

29 *He maketh the, &c.*] A heathen, in relating a history, would say that the winds went down and the storms were allayed. But the prophet, in this change, commends God's providence; giving us to understand, that it comes not to pass by worldly means, that those violent ragings of the sea and the winds, by which the fabrick of the world seems to be shaken to its foundations, cease so suddenly. Therefore, when the sea boils up with terrifick rage, so that every drop does as it were fight one against another, whence comes that sudden stillness and calm, but that God restraineth the waves, whose dashing together was so dreadful, and maketh the waters to stand still, no less than if they were frozen? He places rejoicing in contrast with terrors; whereby it appears more evidently, that they are unthankful, if they cherish not the memory of so notable a deliverance. For they need no instructor, considering that both by the very danger and by the restoration of calmness, they have been taught abundantly, that their life was under the hand and custody of God. Furthermore, he avouches it to be a kind of benefit, which deserves not only to be acknowledged in a man's self, or to be declared within private walls, but also to be published everywhere and in *solemn assemblies*. Nay, he purposely makes mention of *elders*, meaning thereby that the more any man excelled in wisdom, the meeter hearer and witness would he be of these praises.

33 He turneth forth rivers into the wilderness, and springs of water into dryness.

34 And a fruitful land into saltness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35 He turneth the wilderness into a pool of water; and a barren lane into springs of waters.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, which build them a city to dwell in.

37 And they sow the fields, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of the increase.

38 And he blesseth them, and they are mightily multiplied; and he diminisheth not their cattle.

39 Afterward they are diminished and cast down with fear, misery, and sorrow.

40 He poureth out contempt upon princes, and maketh them to wander in places where there is no way.

41 And he raiseth the afflicted out of misery, and maketh him families like a flock of sheep.

33 *He turneth forth &c.*] He enumerates changes which it were worse than absurd to ascribe to fortune. For it falls out that fruitful lands become barren, and barren lands put on a new nature. Whence comes it to pass, that one country becomes barren, and another acquires unwonted fatness, but because God executeth his judgments against the inhabitants of the one in taking away his blessing from them, and maketh the other rich to feed the hungry? That many parts of Asia and Greece, the fertility of which was famous in old time, now lie forlorn, might be imputed to the fewness of men. But as experience teaches that the fatness of some lands is dried up, whereas others begin to wax fruitful, truly in this must needs be acknowledged the providence of God, which the prophet extols. Although it is not enough to believe that God's determination beareth sway in these alterations, except there be added this second point, which the prophet also has not omitted, that the land is cursed for her inhabitants' sakes when they are unworthy to be liberally fed at God's hand. He has put *pools and springs of waters* for moist grounds or watery countries, because continual moisture yields fruitful sap. In the word *saltness*, there is a metaphor, because nothing is more barren than salt, whence also cometh this saying of Christ, Mark ix. 50; *If the salt have lost its savour, to what purpose shall it serve any more?* truly not even to barrenness. And therefore, when they would condemn any place to desolation, they

were wont to sow it with salt. And it may be that when the prophet said that the land was sprinkled with salt, he alluded to the custom of old time.

35 *He turneth, &c.*] This alteration, being set against the former, does the better illustrate God's miraculous power. For if grounds should lose any part of their former fruitfulness, worldly folk would say, as hath been commonly bruited in old time, that the earth after frequent crops resteth as it were, its power of producing being exhausted. But whence have dry grounds their new fatness, so that the air may seem to be altered, together with the nature of the soil, but because God uttereth there a singular token of his goodness? Wherefore not without cause does the prophet say that wildernesses are turned into waterpools, so that populous cities may rise up in waste and uncultivated places, even where there was not one cottage before. For it is no more likely that the nature of the soil is altered, than that the course of the sun and stars is altered. When he says that the *hungry are filled* or *satisfied*, it admits a twofold sense; either that the hungry themselves find wherewith to satisfy their long fasting, or else that God bountifully succoureth the wretched and wandering souls, whom penury constrains to seek a new abiding-place. I rather think that to be noted here, which is commonly wont to come to pass; namely, that the hungry, to whom the world seems to deny meat and drink, and whom even their own country thrusts out of doors, who yet was their mother, are placed comfortably in the wilderness, so that they increase there through the blessing of God. What I have translated *fruit of the increase*, many Hebrew grammarians think to be but a putting of two words in one sense, and understand a copula, thus: *fruit and increase*. But the prophet denotes rather the yearly fruit; as if he should say, It is not for once, or a year or two, that those countries yield fruit, but there is a continual fruitfulness. For the Hebrews call such fruits as the earth brings forth year by year, תבואות. When he says that the new inhabitants *sow the land*, he intimates that there was no use of tillage or husbandry there before that time, and therefore that the country to whose soil that unwonted fatness is given, put on a new face. Finally, he adds that it comes not to pass but by the blessing of God, that they whom want and poverty lately pinched, should grow continually richer and richer.

39 *Afterwards they are, &c.*] Before I come to the matter, thus much is to be briefly noted concerning the words: that עֶצֶר is by some translated *tyranny*, and truly the word עֶצֶר signifies *to bear rule*. But as it is metaphorically taken for

*anguish* or *fear*, this sense seems to suit better. The residue may be read either thus ; *with fear of misery and sorrow*, or else as it is set down already. However, I prefer reading it thus ; *through the anguish of misery and sorrow*. Now touching the effect of the matter, as hitherto there has been described to us what alteration happens to lands in respect of the soils, so now we are taught that men continue not in the same state. For they decrease in number, and fall from their estate, by being reduced either by war, or intestine seditions, or other mischances. Then whether the plague consume part of them, or they receive a slaughter from their enemies, or whether they murder one another by falling together by the ears among themselves, their estate experiences frequent alternations. And whence cometh this, but because God withdraweth his grace, which heretofore was as a secret wellspring from whence prosperity flowed ? And whereas cities suffer sundry mischances, the prophet expresses one kind, notable and apparent above the rest. As God's hand is not considered so much in the case of private and obscure persons, he brings princes themselves upon the stage, whose nobleness suffers it not to lie hid if any thing betide them worthy to be had in remembrance. For the world seems to be made for their sakes. Therefore, when God throweth them down from their estate, men's minds are more awakened to consider his judgments. And the manner of speaking is to be noted, when he says that contempt is poured out upon the princes by the hand of God, like as again, so long as he mindeth to maintain them in their estate, he procureth them reverence. Daniel's sentence is well known ; Daniel ii. 38 : *O king, God hath put the fear of thee in the very birds of the air, and the beasts of the earth*. And undoubtedly, though princes be armed with power, yet nothing defends them more than the inward majesty which God hath engraven on them. Neither could any one village stand three days unless God ruled the minds of all with his secret bridle. Therefore, whensoever God maketh princes despised, it must needs come to pass that all their sovereign power is undermined. And history bears witness that the greatest kings who were a terror to the whole world, were scorned of their own servants, after they were stripped of their estate. But whereas this alteration ought to be accounted for a miracle, our dulness will not suffer us to look upon God's providence. Afterwards, on the contrary, the prophet teaches *that the outcasts and base persons are exalted*, and their houses increased, and that such as no man made account of suddenly flourish in riches



and estimation. Wherein men would acknowledge God's providence, if their own wickedness did not stupify them.

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice; and all iniquity shall stop his own mouth.

43 Who is wise, that he may mark these things? and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

42 *The righteous, &c.*] At length the prophet concludes that so many proofs of God's providence escape not the righteous; but because their vision is quickened through faith, they rejoice in such a spectacle; and the wicked even are dumbfounded. For he wisely puts a difference between the one and the other; because, howsoever the ungodly be forced to acknowledge God as governor of the world, yet in seeing, they see not, and their sight serves but to make them more inexcusable. But the righteous, not only are able to discern, but also willingly open their eyes to behold God's justice, goodness, and wisdom, delighting themselves in the notice thereof. For rejoicing is a sign of willing beholding. As for the ungodly, the prophet means not that their hearts are moved in earnest to believe in deed that the world is governed by God, but that they are so held and bound that they dare not deny God's providence as they could find in their hearts to do, or at least that they are refuted whenever they bark against it. For though God's judgments lie open before them, yet are their minds blinded, that they see not broad light. And this manner of speech has much more force than if he said, that the wicked themselves become dumb. For they themselves do not cease brabbling, but rather we see how insolently they spurn at our faith, and scruple not to pour forth foul blasphemies against God. Yet this saying of the prophet, that the mouth of wickedness is stopped, is most true; because by the very fact, the more fiercely they assail, the more manifestly is their wickedness reprov'd. Moreover, this rejoicing whereof the prophet makes mention, springs from this, that nothing is fitter to build up faith, than the knowledge of God's providence, because if that be once taken away, each man will not only chafe with himself, but also surmise that the world is directed by chance. Therefore they that go about to overthrow this point of doctrine, deprive God's children of the true joy, and tormenting their minds with miserable unquietness, make themselves a hell in this world. For what more hor-



rible torment can there be to us, than to tremble in anxious and endless suspense? For peace of mind there can be none until we have learned to rest upon God's providence. Further, this clause shews that whereas God offereth his goodness to all men without exception, yet there are but few out of the countless multitude that profit by it. Whence it follows that his former exhorting of all men to praise God's goodness, was to make manifest the unthankfulness of many.

43 *Who is wise, &c.*] He means that men are then wise when they apply their hearts to the considering of God's works, and that the rest, when they pass over the light that is offered them with closed eyes, are fools, and however shrewd they may appear, perish in their own cunning. And by the interrogation he glances at the false persuasion that prevails in the world, while the boldest despiser of God thinks himself wisest; as if he should say, They shall all of them be found to be but fools, who are not sharp-sighted in this behalf. And so much the more requisite is this warning, because we see that some of the greatest philosophers were so narrow-minded, that they laboured in nothing more than in putting out of sight God's providence, or at least in coining secondary causes whereunto to tie themselves and others, utterly neglecting God. Foremost of them was Aristotle, as well in genius as in learning, and yet being a heathen and of unsanctified mind, it was always his endeavour to mystify God's providence by a multitude of vague speculations. Nay, whatsoever acumen God had bestowed upon that profane caitiff, he applied to the quenching of all light. And the prophet not only condemns the Epicurians of madness, whose infatuation was of grosser kind, but also gives us to understand that the blindness in these the greatest philosophers was more portentously detestable. By the word *mark*, he teaches that it is not enough if a man suddenly take hold of God's works, but that there is need also of heedful marking, to digest this knowledge maturely. Therefore there is required continual meditation, that may engrave it thoroughly on our hearts. The alteration of the number is not without a grace, when the prophet says, *Who is wise, and they shall understand?* For first, he complains covertly of the fewness of those that mark God's judgments, as if he should say, How rarely will be found a true beholder of God's works! Afterwards, he shews that they appear before all men's eyes, so that they have nothing to hinder them but their own wickedness. Furthermore, if any one ask why the prophet, after he has discoursed of God's judgments, and of his strict justice, touches now only on his

mercies; I answer, that among God's works his goodness evermore excels, and as it were holds the sovereignty, even as he is in his nature prone to beneficence, whereby also he allureth us chiefly to him.

### PSALM CVIII.

[*A Song or Psalm of David.*]

2 My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

3 Up, *my* viol and harp; I will arise early.

4 I will praise thee, O Lord, among peoples: and sing unto thee among nations.

5 For great is thy goodness above the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

6 Exalt thyself, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth:

7 That thy beloved may be delivered; save *me* with thy right hand, and hear me.

8 God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice; I shall divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

9 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver;

10 Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast my shoe; upon Philistia will I triumph.

11 Who will lead me into the strong city? who will bring me unto Edom?

12 Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst put us back; and wentest not out, O God, among our armies?

13 Give us rescue from our trouble: for vain is the help of man.

14 Through God we shall do mightily: and he shall tread our adversaries under foot.

Forasmuch as this Psalm is composed partly of the fifty-seventh, and partly of the sixtieth, it were a superfluous labour to repeat here what we have said there.

## PSALM CIX.

*It consists of three principal members. For it begins with a complaint, thereto is added a long roll of imprecations, and after them follows a prayer, with a testimony of thankfulness. And though there is no doubt David complained of the wrongs done to himself, yet, as he represented another person, whatsoever is said applies strictly to Christ the head of the church, and to each one of the faithful, as they are his members, so that they may implore the help of the heavenly avenger when they are wrongfully vexed by enemies.*

*[To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.]*

1 O God of my praise, hold not thy peace ;

2 For the mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of deceit are opened upon me : they have spoken to me with the tongue of guile.

3 And they have compassed me about with the words of hatred ; and have fought against me without cause.

4 For my loving they have been against me : but I gave myself to prayer.

5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my loving.

1 *O God of my praise, &c.]* By this opening David avouches, that neither does he desire any other defender of his innocence than God, nor is there any other to be found in any place. For in calling him the God of his praise he commits his innocence to him, though he was condemned by the verdicts almost of the whole world. Some understand it actively, as if David should call himself the proclaimer of God's praises. But the circumstances disprove that sense, because we see that David, being oppressed with unjust and cruel hatred in the world, takes refuge in God's judgment. And there is an implied antithesis. For when slanderous reports prevail, then does innocence retain its estimation and price nowhere but before God. The sense then is this: Lord, howsoever I may be accounted the most depraved of men, and exposed to the slanders of the whole world, yet wilt thou be the vindicator of mine innocence, and for the same cause my praise also. That which he adds immediately after is also in perfect keeping with this ;

*Hold not thy peace.* For it were against reason that God, who is the witness of our innocence, should hold his peace when we are borne down by the slanderous reports of the wicked. Furthermore, you must bear in mind what I have said, that he so bewails his private wrongs that he suffered, as that in his own person he represents Christ and the whole body of his church. Therefore, though men load us with all kind of reproaches, let us learn to rest contented in the defence of God alone. For no man can commit himself to God with an unfeigned heart, but he that has determined in himself to despise all reproaches of the world, provided that, assured of a good conscience, he hath God the maintainer of his cause.

2 *For the mouth, &c.]* David expresses more plainly, that the cause why he calls upon God so importunately for help is, that there is no justice to be found among men. And though it be likely that David was furiously assaulted, yet his complaint is, that the mouths of guile or deceit were opened against him, and that he was beset by false tongues. Whence it appears that he was borne down by slanders before the unskilful, under a specious colour, so as it was not possible for him to avoid the imputation of guilt.

3 *And they have, &c.]* He complains bitterly that he had been besieged with unkind reports, whereas he had deserved no such thing. And by a goodly similitude he shews that there was such a flow of venom in the tongues of his enemies, that he was more sorely beset by them than by a great host, yea, and that without cause. This species of war is to be marked, wherewith God for the most part exerciseth his own children. For though Satan assail them with open violence, yet, like the father of lies, as he is, he essays also to blacken them by amazing artifices of calumny, as though they were the dregs and offscourings of the world. Now, as what had been shadowed in David was afterwards fulfilled in Christ, so must we bear in mind that *that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ is daily filling up in the faithful*: Coloss. i. 24, because he having once suffered in himself, calleth them to be fellows and partakers with him.

4 *For my loving, &c.]* He had already protested that his enemies, being unprovoked by any injury, were set against him without cause, and only of devilish spite. The same he confirms now, saying he had been their friend: for it is a greater thing to love, than to abstain from all harm-doing. And hereby we perceive how monstrous are the impulses of Satan, when he holds men's minds in thralldom. For nothing is less agreeable to nature, than to pursue with rancour and cruelty to spite such as love us. Also

to *love* he adds good offices ; meaning, that he had endeavoured to deserve well at their hands by outward benefits. *But I gave myself unto prayer.* Some understand it, that though David's enemies rushed upon him with such fury, yet he prayed for them. To which meaning answers what we have had in Psalm xxxv. 13. But I think the plainer meaning is, that when he was cruelly vexed, he set not his mind upon unlawful means, to requite like for like ; but was content with the protection of God alone, and made his resort to him. And it is a mark of great virtue, for a man that is unworthily harmed, and whom injuries stir up to revenge, so to bridle his affections as to appeal only to the judgment of God. For those who desire to live well with good men, so far as that matter goes, yet, if they have to deal with ill men, think it lawful for them to requite wrongs with wrongs ; and there is none of the godly that feels not this kind of temptation in himself. But the Holy Ghost casteth a bridle upon us, and telleth us that though our enemies by their outrage force us a hundred times to desire revenge, yet must we bid all violence and craftiness avaunt, and betake us only to prayer. And by this example of his, David teaches us, that these are the weapons wherewith we must fight, if we have a desire to conquer under God's auspices. A like place is there in Psalm lxix. 13; *They that sat in the gate spake against me, and they that drink strong drink sing of me. But I made my prayer unto thee, O Lord.* For there also the expression is elliptical. Moreover, by these words David means that although he found the whole world against him, yet was it sufficient to quiet his mind, to cast his cares upon God. Now seeing that the Holy Ghost hath not endited these prayers to David and to all the godly for nought, whosoever follows this form needs not doubt but that according as God shall see he is spitefully persecuted, so will he be forward to help him.

6 Set thou a wicked man over him; and let the adversary stand at his right hand.

7 When he cometh in to be judged, let him go forth guilty ; and let his prayer be turned into sin.

8 Let his days be few; and let another man take his charge.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

10 Let his children wander as vagabonds, and beg: and let them seek out of their wasted places.

11 Let the extortioner entangle all that he hath :  
and let foreigners spoil his labour.

6 *Set thou a wicked man, &c.*] Whereas he has hitherto in the plural number complained of a great multitude, now he points out as it were but one man. Notwithstanding, it may be that he speaks of each of them as it were of one. And yet it is no less likely, that some one certain person, who held chief place among those wicked persons, is more pointedly aimed at than the rest. Neither dislike I the conjecture of those who refer it to the person of Doeg, whom we know to have sought destruction by his perfidious treachery, not only against David, but also against the godly priests; and we know that this Psalm is applied by Peter to Judas: Acts, i. 20. But it will square as well, and perhaps better, to understand this complaint of some familiar friend of his. Now, as for the curses, you must bear in mind what I have said heretofore, that as often as David conceived these bannings or wishes of cursing, he was not moved thereto by immoderate affection of the flesh, nor pleaded his own cause individually, by unadvised zeal. These three things must be noted diligently, for according as each man loves himself, so, intent on his own interest, he rushes headlong to revenge; therefore according as each man is devoted exclusively to self, so is he inordinately impelled by concern for his individual advantage. From the love of self-profit there arises another vice. For no man desires to be revenged of his enemies because it is right and just, but because he feeds his own hatred. Indeed this colour is pretended, but the rancour that boils within blinds men's minds, by removing all remembrance of justice. When these two defects, namely, the exclusive regard of self, and the headiness of the flesh are corrected, there is also required a third stay, that is, to allay the heat of foolish zeal, and to follow the spirit as our guide. Now, if any one that is carried away with an untoward zeal should pretend the example of David, it shall profit him nothing; for that which Christ answered to his disciples will justly apply to them; *Ye know not of what spirit ye are*: Luke ix. 55. Wherefore, so much the more detestable a profanation is it, that the monks, and especially the Franciscans, pervert this Psalm to unhallowed purposes. For if a man have a deadly enemy, whom he would wish to come to mischief, it is well known that he hires some of those varlets to rehearse this Psalm every day. Yea, verily, I know a certain noble woman in the realm of France that kept certain of the grey friars in her

pay to curse her only-begotten son after this manner. But now I return to David, who, being clear from all inordinate passion, uttered his prayers under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As for the ungodly, because, running a-head to destroy good and simple, and in contempt of God, they shake off all restraint, so that no modesty or uprightness can hold them back, they are most worthy of this punishment, that a wicked man should have dominion over them. And also, as they contrive mischief to good men by their secret plots, they worthily deserve that God should prepare an adversary that should never depart from their side. Only let the faithful beware of too much haste when they pray, and rather give room for God's grace, for it may come to pass that he who hates us mortally to-day, may be friends with us to-morrow.

7 *When he shall be judged, &c.*] Another imprecation: that being brought to judgment he might be punished without any pity, and though he crave pardon humbly, yet that the judge may continue inexorable. Indeed this might be understood not inaptly to the judgment of God himself. But as it agrees strictly with men's judgments, I would not depart from the accustomed interpretation. There are, then, two points; that the wickedness of the ungodly might be laid open, so that there might be no way to clear themselves, and that all deprecation might be rejected. Therefore he says he goes forth guilty from the presence of the judge, his wicked deeds discovered and condemned, who bears away with him the stigma of condemnation which he had deserved. In respect of God's judgment-seat, it were also not against reason that the prayer of the ungodly should be turned upon them for sin. For we know that all their sacrifices are an abomination; and that like as they themselves are filthy, so all virtues which seem goodly in them, stink before God. But as the text runs better as applied to earthly judges, I do not insist upon that point.

8 *Let his days be few, &c.*] However many the sorrows with which this life is crowded, yet do we know it to be a pledge and witness of God's blessing; according as God oftentimes, in token of his favour, promiseth to prolong men's lives; not because it is expedient for us to linger in it, but because God's fatherly love is tasted in it, which may lead us to the hope of everlasting life. On the contrary, the shortness of life is set here for a sign of disfavour: for God, by taking the wicked out of the world after a violent manner, declareth that they are unworthy of the common breath. The same is to be said also, when he thrusteth them out of authority and throweth them down from their high estate. True it is



that this selfsame thing betides the children of God also. For temporal punishments light as well upon the good as the bad indiscriminately. But yet this medley is never so confused, but that now and then there appear manifest judgments of God, and worthy to be marked. Peter, citing this verse, Acts, i. 20, says it ought of necessity to be fulfilled in Judas, because it is written here, *let another take his bishoprick*. And he proceeds on the principle, that David spoke in the person of Christ. Therefore, although the word פקודה, signify generally any manner of charge, yet Peter expounds it fitly of the apostleship of Judas. And it may be believed that the exposition of the Hebrew interpreters upon this place, is grounded upon malice, some of them expounding it of a wife, some of the soul, (which is a precious jewel in man,) and others, of substance. For to what purpose is it that a clear and easy word should be so wrested, but that they labour of malice to deface it, lest the place might seem to be fitly alleged by Peter? Moreover, by these words we are taught that there is no cause why the wicked should be proud when they reign in the world, because the end which the Holy Ghost denounceth here awaits them after all. And unto us also here is ministered most excellent matter of patience and comfort, when we hear that how high soever they be advanced now, yet their casting down presses close upon them. In the next two verses the curse is extended to the wife and children also; and truly the widowhood of the wife, and the fatherlessness of the children depend upon that shortness of life that the prophet spoke of just now. But there is added *beggary* and want of all things, whence is gathered the heinousness of the crime: for the Holy Ghost would not denounce such grievous and sore punishment for a slight fault. When David dooms his goods to the extortioner, and abandons them to the spoil, that is referred to the poverty of the children; for he speaks not of any obscure and poor person, that at his death leaves nothing to his children, but of such a one as without regard to right or wrong has gathered to himself wherewith to enrich his children, if God did not pluck out of his hand the goods that he had gotten by the spoil of others.

12 Let there be none to prolong mercy unto him; neither let there be any to pity his fatherless children.

13 Let his posterity be destroyed; and in the next generation let his very name be wiped out.

14 Let the iniquity of his father be called to remembrance before the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be done away.

15 Let them be before the Lord alway, and let him root out the remembrance of them from the earth.

16 Because he minded not to shew mercy, but persecuted the miserable and poor man, and the sorrowful hearted, to slay him.

12 *Let there be, &c.*] The Hebrews take *prolonging, gentleness, and mercy*, for steadfastness in doing good, and sometimes also for pitying, or for being moved to sympathy, when anger becomes mitigated by long continuance of time, and the greatness of the affliction also subdues the spirit. Therefore some expound this place so that no man should be favourable even to his children; which sense is confirmed by the second part of the verse. Nevertheless, David comprehends also the ungodly man himself together with his issue; as if he should say, Although he himself pine away with daily miseries, and his calamity hold on in one continued course, even to his children, yet let no man be touched with pity. For we know it falls out for the most part, that the protracted misery of an enemy, either forces even cruel natures to compassion, or else causes them to forget their hatred and illwill. But here David wishes that his enemy, and all that come after him, may be so odious and detestable, that the hatred of the whole people may by no miseries be satisfied, but that all men may shut up their compassion at the sight of it, as though their hearts were of iron. And it is to be borne in mind, that David is not impelled inordinately by his own private grief, but, as it were out of the mouth of God, utters what manner of punishments are laid up for the wicked: like as also the law reckons this for one of God's judgments; namely, that he hardeneth men's hearts, that such as have been cruel without measure, should not find any mercy; Deut. ii. 30. For it is just that the same measure which they have used towards others, should be meted out to themselves again.

13 *Let his posterity, &c.*] He proceeds with that which he began to say just now, that God should make the sins of the fathers recoil into the bosoms of the children. That he now uses the plural number may be taken thus; because he had to deal with the whole court of Saul, and not with any one man. But as we know that in all wicked proceedings, some are captains and ringleaders; it is no marvel though he

turn from one man to many, and then return to the same one again. Notwithstanding, the plainest way is, that it should be referred to his offspring, because the word אחרית implies *a multitude*. And it is a sorer curse than the other that went before: for it often happens that a house which is overthrown by some sudden misfortune, afterwards rises up again. But here the prophet wishes the ungodly to be cast down into such ruin, that they may never gather strength again to recover their former state: for such is meant by wiping out the name of them in the next generation, or at the end of an age. And like as he dooms the whole families of the wicked to destruction, that God should punish them in their posterity; so desires he that the faults of their fathers and mothers may be called to remembrance, that they may be added to the heap of their damnation: and this is taken out of the common doctrine of scripture. For like as God prolongeth and continueth his mercy towards the offspring, because the remembrance of his covenant flourishes to a thousand generations; so also doth he punish sins to the third and fourth generation. Not that he involveth the guiltless with the wicked indiscriminately; but because in depriving the reprobates of grace and the light of his Spirit, he prepareth the vessels of wrath to damnation even before they are born; Rom. ix. 21. Ordinary sense shrinks from this rigour; but thereby is to be learned that God's secret and incomprehensible judgments are wronged, when we measure them by our own small capacity. Then let this so rigorous a denunciation strike us with such fear as may humble our minds unto reverence. As for the saying of Ezekiel, xviii. 20, *The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father, but the soul that sinneth, the same shall die*; we know that in that place are confuted the groundless complaints of the people, who boasted themselves to be guiltless, and therefore punished undeservedly. But whensoever God pursueth his vengeance from the fathers to the children, he leaveth them no place of defence, because they are all of them tied up in the same bundle of ungodliness. And we have already said, that the beginning of vengeance is, that God, in withdrawing his Spirit as well from the children, as from the fathers, yieldeth both in thralldom to Satan. It might be demanded, that seeing the prophet wishes their sin to be had always in remembrance before God, why he adds not also, that their name should be wiped out of heaven, but only wishes them to decay and perish in the world; I answer, that he spoke according to the manner of his time, in which spiritual punishments were not as yet so manifestly disclosed, because the ripe time of full revelation was not yet come.

Again, David's mind is to have God's vengeance appear evident among men, so that the whole world may perceive him to be a just judge.

16 *Because he minded not, &c.*] Now he shews that it was not without cause that he wishes such sore and cruel punishment to his enemies, inasmuch as their fury was insatiable, persecuting the afflicted soul with rage no less obstinate than cruel, as if they fell upon a dead dog. For even the philosophers account it the property of low and slavish natures to be cruel to miserable persons that have no power to withstand them: for envy exists between equals. And therefore the prophet enhances the maliciousness of his enemies, in that they persecuted him when he was in misery and poverty. More forcible also is that he adds, *the heart-broken, or sorrowful-hearted*. For there are found afflicted persons who nevertheless cease not to swell with pride; and the less such monstrousness is to be borne with, the more they provoke against themselves the displeasure of the powerful. But when the heart is once cast down, it is a token of extreme cruelty if a man spurn at them still. For what is that else than to wrestle with shadows? Moreover, his insatiable cruelty is denoted by this saying, *in that he remembered not to shew pity*. For he means that no misery of the guiltless and wretched man could soften him so that, at least from a sense of the common lot of humanity, he should cease from his brutality. Therefore the mutual contrast answers very well between such wilful stubbornness and God's inexorable judgment. Now seeing David has not spoken but by the moving of the Holy Ghost, this cursing is to be taken exactly as if God himself should thunder out of his heavenly throne. So on the one side he beats down and bridles in us all unhallowed desires of doing harm, by denouncing vengeance, and on the other side assuages our sorrow by giving us comfort whereby to bear all wrongs patiently. Indeed the wicked do for a time triumph in their own lust without control. But this threatening shews that God receiveth not the miserable into his protection in vain: only let the faithful restrain themselves in meekness, that the casting down of their heart may ascend into the sight of God. And as it is not given to us to discern the elect from the reprobate, we must learn to wish well to all such as trouble us; to desire the salvation of all mankind; yea, and to be careful for every individual person. And yet meanwhile this will be no hindrance, if our minds are pure and composed, but that we may freely appeal to God's judgment, that he should destroy all that are past hope of recovery.

17 He loved cursing, and it shall come upon him : he had no delight in blessing, and *therefore* it shall be far from him.

18 And let him be clothed with cursing as with a garment : and let it come as water into his bowels, and as oil into his bones.

19 Let it be as a coat to cover him, and as the girdle that he always girdeth himself withal.

20 Let this be the work from God of them that be against me, and of such as speak evil against me.

17 *He loved cursing, &c.*] David is diffuse in the recital of his enemies' iniquity, that it may the better appear that when he is so rigorous towards them he does but acquiesce in God's judgment. For we must always see to this, that as often as we approach God's judgment-seat, the certain and apparent goodness of our cause may procure us his favour. David therefore avouches, that upon assurance of a good conscience he calls upon God to give judgment against his enemies. The verbs are indeed of the time past, thus: cursing came upon him, and blessing was far from him: but they must be translated in the mood of wishing. For still David prays that his enemy may be requited the evils that he did him. Therefore, as he was utterly void of all good actions, or rather delighted in doing ill, so now he would have him subject to all evils. Some take *cursing* for *imprecations* and *bannings*; as if he had said, he had been given to cursing, and had breathed nothing but destructions and disastrous and adverse luck. Which, though I reject not, yet I willingly extend it further; that by his hurting and annoying he endeavoured to put away all blessing, and delighted in the calamities of the good and simple. Many interpreters translate the two next verses in the time past, thus: *He clothed himself with cursing, &c.* As though David should say that his enemy was no less desirous of cursing than of costly apparel, or that he wrapped himself in it as in a garment, and that this disease was deeply seated in his bones and in his marrow. Notwithstanding, the other meaning is the simpler; that cursing should stick fast to the ungodly, cover him like a cloak, gird him about as his girdle, yea, and pierce even into his bones. But always it behoves us to bear in mind that David deals not in a private case of his own, nor is as some one of the common sort, lest any man might rashly take example from that which he speaks here by the peculiar instinct of the Holy Ghost. And it is not

to be doubted but that as he was one of the general number of the faithful he followed the rule of charity in wishing all men to be saved. But here God lifted up his spirit above all worldly respects; according also as he divested him of anger and all inordinate passions, so that he might with holy modesty and with the wisdom of the Spirit doom a reprobate and castaway to destruction. Some expound *he loved cursing* in thiswise; namely, that he provoked vengeance against himself of set purpose, as though he drew down destruction on himself by declaring war against God; but it seems to be constrained. And therefore the exposition I have set down already must be held still, namely, that he was so given over to wrong and wickedness, that no justice or mercy was to be gotten at his hand. By the way it is to be noted, that whatsoever the wicked do practise recoils in the end upon their own heads; and the more fiercely they rage, the more they procure to themselves whatsoever they purpose against others, even as the wind called Cecias does by blowing draw clouds unto him.

20 *Let this be the work, &c.*] He means the hire or reward of the work, and he says expressly *from God*, to testify that he himself trusts still in God alone, although left bare and destitute of all worldly helps upon earth. And by this verse we gather, that David cursed not his enemies vaguely and rashly, but pronounced quietly that which the Spirit put into his mind. I confess, indeed, that many under pretence of such assurance do nevertheless rush headlong to frowardness and intemperance. But what David saw by the unclouded eye of faith, that did he also utter with calm zeal; that is, that as he gave himself to godliness, and was fenced by God's hand, there was a reward laid up for his enemies. And hence I gather, that he had not an eye to men so that he fluctuated according as he saw the world go with him or against him, but rested upon God alone. And surely whosoever shall depend upon men, shall be out of patience at every little trifle. Therefore, after the example of this holy man, although the whole world forsake us, yet it becomes us to lift up our minds on high, and to look for our defender from thence. If it be his pleasure to deliver us by the hand of men, he will soon find out ministers to do it by. But if he disappoint us of all worldly help for the trial of our faith, he must not be despoiled of his honour until his judgment, in which we patiently acquiesce, appear in due season.

21 And thou, O Lord my Lord, deal with me ac-



according to thy name : deliver me, because thy mercy is good.

22 Because I am poor and needy : and my heart is wounded within me.

23 I walk forth as a shadow when it is going down : I am shaken off as a grasshopper.

24 My knees falter through fasting, and my flesh is dried up from the fatness.

25 Also I became a reproach unto them : when they see me they shake their head.

26 Help me, O Lord my God : save me according to thy mercifulness ;

27 And they shall know that this is thy hand ; *and that* thou, O Lord, hast' done it.

21 *And thou, O Lord, &c.*] From his complaints and cursing of his enemies he passes to prayers. Nay, after he has set before him God as his deliverer, he seems to have encouraged himself to praying by occasion thereof, even as all the godly meditations wherewith the saints exercise and confirm their faith also stir them up to calling upon God's name. Howbeit, he neither boasts of any merit, whereby he should deserve God's help, neither leans he upon his own worthiness, but makes God's mercy his only sanctuary. He did, indeed, set the innocence, whereof he was assured in himself, against his enemies, that their injustice might appear the better. But he deals not with God about recompensing, because he holds to a higher principle, that he owes all things to God's free election, and that his welfare depends upon the same. Now if any man might glory of his own virtue and merits, surely David was not the man who was least entitled to do so: and, besides, was the representative of Christ and of the whole church. Whence it follows, that all prayers come to nought except they are grounded upon God's mercy. The case of Christ, who by his own righteousness pacified the Father, was indeed a special case. But as whatsoever he had in his human nature depended upon the good pleasure of God, his will was to lead us to the same fountain by his own example. But what shall we do, of whom even the most upright must always be fain to confess himself to be loaded with many sins? so far is any of us from making God beholden to him of any right. Then remains there but one thing; that because God is gracious of his own nature, and will have his graciousness



to shine forth in our welfare, and because his mercy is good, he should defend us. Therefore, as often as we approach God, we must remember these two things; that we have need of the testimony of a good conscience, and that we must imagine no worthiness, wherewith to bind God unto us, and no desert, whereunto he should owe any reward. For if God glorify his name and his goodness in the preservation of this frail and transitory life, how much more ought all trust of works to cease when we come to the heavenly and everlasting life! If he do but prolong my life a little while upon earth, in so doing he glorifieth his name, shewing himself to be good and bounteous of his own accord. Seeing, then, that rescuing me from the tyranny of the devil, he adopteth me among his own children, washeth away my filthiness with the blood of Christ, begetteth me anew with his Holy Spirit, ingrafteth me into the body of his Son, and bringeth me to the life of heaven, surely the more liberally he dealeth with me, the less is it lawful for me to challenge any part of the praise to myself. Contrariwise, David, to procure himself favour, alleges his own misery and need. And forasmuch as outward affliction would not suffice, unless he were cast down, and all stubbornness put away, he repeats that his heart is wounded. Whereby we are warned that God will be a physician to none but such as pour out their sighs to him with true submission, and are not benumbed in their afflictions.

*23 I walk forth, &c.]* These two similitudes are very apt: on the first I have said somewhat already in Psalm cii. 12; that is, that an afflicted person, and such a one as is half dead, is very suitably compared to an evening shadow. For when the sun rises, or is mounted on high the continual alteration of shadows is not so easily perceived. But when he draws towards his going down, there passes no moment in which a shadow does not flit before our eyes. By the other similitude is denoted a fluctuating state. For as grasshoppers are ever skipping hither and thither, even so David complains that he had a restless life, because his persecutors followed upon him from time to time, and suffered him to have a quiet retreat nowhere; according also, as in Psalm xi. 1, he says he is compelled to flee like a sparrow that has nets set for her everywhere by fowlers. But as to the general effect, he bewails his miserable lot, that he can nowhere abide in safety, or rather, that there is no place left for him among men. Now as he represents to us an image of the whole church in this Psalm, let us not marvel if God disquiet us also, and shake off our drowsiness with much variety of chances; according as Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 11, calls

himself and others, persons who have no certain dwelling-place, which title applies in a manner to all the children of God.

24 *My knees, &c.*] It may be taken as a token of mourning, that David, though he had a supply of food, yet afflicted himself with voluntary abstinence and fasting, no less than gave himself to praying. Also thereby may be denoted the loathing of meat and drink: for we know that such as are in sorrow and heaviness have no appetite for food, even as they are disgusted with life itself. If any man had rather refer it to neediness, because David suffered much hunger and penury, when he hid himself in the dens of wild beasts to escape the cruelty of his enemies, let him enjoy his own interpretation. Nevertheless he seems to me to denote by this sign the deepest grief, inasmuch as he abhorred both meat and drink, because he saw death before his eyes. To the same effect also tends that which follows immediately after: *that his flesh was dried up from the fatness*, because a sorrowful heart dries up the bones; Proverbs, xvii. 22. Some expound fatness to denote dainties, as if he should say he was bereft of all dainty fare. Notwithstanding, the more natural sense is that he was become lean through heaviness and fasting, because his moisture was consumed. And he increases the heinousness of the matter by another circumstance; that he was a laughing-stock to all men, according also as he has complained in Psalm xxii. A sorrowful and a bitter thing is it to God's children to feel the curse which God denounceth against the transgressors of his law to be turned upon their own heads. For the law says to the despisers thereof, Thou shalt be made a laughing-stock and a shaking of the head; Deut. xxviii. 37. And with this kind of temptation was David assailed: and he says not only that he was accounted for a condemned person, but also that he was wantonly scorned, not without indirect scoffing at God; according as it is customary with the ungodly, when they rear up their crests under pretence of our afflictions, at the same time to rail at our faith and religion, because God succoureth us not in our miseries.

26 *Help me, O Lord, &c.*] The prophet repeats his prayer, even as it is needful for us to contend and struggle with the greater zeal, the more the engines Satan brings to bear upon us. For though we may be thoroughly persuaded that we stand in God's favour, yet when he delayeth, and the ungodly assail us with their cavils, it is not possible but many doubts must wind themselves in, and from time to time recur to us. Therefore, to hold out against such assaults, David has good reason in setting this shield

so often before him: That God, such is his clemency, succoureth his servants in their necessity. And he desires to be delivered, not by ordinary means, but by the special power of God, so that his enemy may hold his peace for shame. For we know that God now and then helpeth his servants secretly, and sometimes stretcheth out his arm openly, so that the ungodly, yea, though they shut their eyes, are notwithstanding compelled to perceive some supernatural working. For as his enemies had vaunted themselves against God, even so on the other hand he desires to triumph over them in God's behalf. For he seeks not to appropriate the praise of warlike prowess, but that God's might should be manifested, that it might bring all flesh low. Howbeit this may not only be understood of the deliverance, but also be extended to the very affliction itself. His chief desire however is, that his salvation should be ascribed to the grace of God. For in setting God's hand as well against fortune as against all worldly means, his meaning is to have God to be recognised as the only author of it. Which is to be marked advisedly, because though all of us desire to be preserved by God's hand, yet scarce one in a hundred makes the setting forth of God's glory his aim. But it would become us to make more account of that than of our own welfare, according also as it excels it in degree. Now, whosoever he is that covets to have even the ungodly themselves so convinced as that they might not be ignorant of God's working, much more must he weigh the help of God, which he feels by experience in himself. For it were preposterous indeed to allege the hand of God against others, unless the knowledge thereof were settled in our own minds.

28 They shall curse, and thou shalt bless: when they rise up, they shall be put to shame; but thy servant shall rejoice.

29 Mine adversaries shall be clothed with reproach; and they shall cover themselves with their own shame, as with a garment.

30 I will praise the Lord greatly with my mouth; and I will magnify him in the assembly of great men.

31 Because he standeth at the right hand of the poor, to save his life from condemnations.

28 *They shall curse, &c.*] In this place the interpreters vary. For some translate the whole sentence in the mood

of wishing: *Let them curse, so that thou bless: let them rise up and be clothed with shame.* Others keep still the future tense of the indicative mood, to whom I willingly give my consent. Nevertheless, if any one would rather understand it in the way of granting, I will not withstand them: in my judgment, however, they are deceived who will have it to be a prayer; for David rather, after he has made his prayers, now without fear boasts of God's favour. • In vain, says he, shall they curse me, because thou wilt bless me. And by this means he shews himself not to be afraid of his enemies' threats, though they should be armed with venom of tongue to do mischief no less than with a sword. Therefore that the malice, the wickedness, the boldness, the strength, and the fury of our enemies may not at any time abash our hearts; let us learn by David's example to set God on our side, who is able to dissipate all their attempts as if they were smoke. And surely then hath God's favour its free scope, when, through the brightness thereof, all manner of terror that was thrown in our way by the world vanishes away. David, therefore, upon trust of God's favour, sings the song of victory to himself even in the midst of the battle, courageously despising whatsoever his enemies had practised against him, because they shall not prevail against God's blessing. Which is better expressed by the next verse; *although they rise up, yet shall they be put to shame.* For he means that the fury of his enemies is not yet tamed; nevertheless, he gives them leave to rage, and lavish their fierceness, provided he himself be fenced with God's hand. And so he raises and confirms both himself and others by his example against all the pride of the world, even when the wickedness of our enemies seems to have the upper-hand. Upon this hope he promises himself an end of his sorrow for the time to come. Whence we gather that afflictions must be borne mildly and with meek minds, until the ripe time of gladness may come. Also he proceeds with the same glorying in the next verse. For though he see the wicked to be hoisted up in great stateliness, yet, looking beyond the present with the eye of faith, he doubts not that God will at length baffle and make sport of their attempts.

30 *I will praise the Lord, &c.*] By this clause appears more plainly what I said just now, that David rather provokes his enemies with holy boasting of faith than pray. For as though he had obtained his desire, he addresses himself to thanksgiving. And when he says, *with my mouth*, there is no pleonasm in that expression, as some erroneously suppose, but he expresses that he will give thanks

to God openly; as if he should say, I will not only weigh by myself, with secret fervour of heart, or alone without witnesses, what God hath done for me, but also in the stated sacrifice of praise, openly and before men, I will testify how much I am indebted to his grace. In which sense he adds presently, *in the assembly of great men, or, of many men.* For the word עֲבֵרִי may be construed both ways. Notwithstanding, I choose rather to translate it *great men*, because David seems to betoken a great and honourable assembly of elders. Certainly he professes that he will be thankful to God, not only in some dark corner, but also in the most crowded assemblies of people, yea, and even among the elders themselves. For although the heart must go before the tongue in setting forth God's praises, yet is it a token of coldness if the tongue do not also attend it. And David makes mention of the mouth only, because he took this for granted, that the praises which sound in men's ears are but vain and trifling, except the heart speak before God. And therefore from very fervour of heartfelt affection he breaks out into outward confession, even as also the desire of edifying one another ought to stir up the faithful to this duty; for otherwise God is defrauded of his due honour. Also he states the manner of his thanksgiving; namely, that *God stood at the right hand of the poor.* And his meaning is, that at what time God seemed to have departed far from him, neglecting and forsaking him, yet was he always near at hand with him, so that he was ready to help him in due season. For surely David's poverty and affliction gave a kind of resemblance of casting off, inasmuch as God withdrew or concealed his favour. Yet does he acknowledge that God was always present with him, though he were afflicted and poor. And he expresses the extremity of his case more plainly, when he says that *he was saved from the judges of his life.* By which words he gives us to understand, not only that he had to deal with most potent enemies, even with the king and the nobles of the realm, but also that they, upon proud presumption of their own power, despised him as a dead dog, as though his life had been past recovery. For my part, I doubt not but he complains here, not only that he was sore vexed by the cruelty of his enemies, but also that he was slanderously and reproachfully railed upon. For we know he was oppressed by the wickedness of such as, being in authority, vaunted a false pretence of administering justice.

## PSALM CX.

*Here is set forth the everlastingness, as well of Christ's sovereignty as of his priesthood. And first of all, David affirms that God hath given Christ supreme dominion, together with invincible power, wherewith to beat down all his enemies whencesoever they rise up, or else to force them to obedience. Secondly, he adds that God will enlarge the bounds of this kingdom far and wide. Thirdly, he avouches Christ to be garnished no less with the honour of priest than of king, yea, and that by solemn oath. And lastly, he says that it shall be a new order of priesthood, the coming in whereof shall make an end of the Levitical priesthood, which was ordained but for a time, and shall itself continue for ever and ever.*

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The Lord shall send the sceptre of thy power out of Sion: bear thou rule in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people *shall come* with willing oblations in the day of *the mustering* of thine army, in beauty of holiness: the dew of thy youth *shall come* unto thee out of the womb from the morning.

As Christ avoucheth this Psalm to have been made concerning himself, we ought not to seek proof thereof elsewhere than out of his mouth. But though his authority were not brought to bear upon it, yea, and the testimony of the apostles also, the very Psalm itself cries out that it will admit none other exposition. For though we have to encounter all the most stubborn of the Jews, yet will we wrench from them by irrefragable arguments, that the things which are spoken here apply neither to David nor to any other person, save only the Mediator. I grant, indeed, that an image of Christ's kingdom was shadowed in the person of David, but neither of himself nor of any of his successors could he avouch that a king should reign far, who at the time should be a priest, not of the law, but after the order of Melchisedek, yea, and that for ever. For a new and unaccustomed dignity of priesthood could not at that time be set up but by taking away the honour from the Levites.



Neither could the everlastingness mentioned here be verified in any mortal man, because in all other, saving this one man, the honour is presently terminated by the brief and uncertain period of life. However, as these points will be to be handled by and by, in their proper place, let it suffice to have touched upon them now in brief.

1 *The Lord said, &c.*] That which is spoken here might to some extent apply to the person of David; for neither did he himself mount the royal throne without sufficient authority, nor did he work his way to it by sinister arts, nor was he lifted into it by ill-advised suffrages, but he reigned by God's command. Nay, it might justly be said of all the kings of the world, that they are placed in their thrones by God, because the several estates of this world are appointed by the decree of heaven, and *there is no power but of God*; Rom. xiii. 1. But David meant to put a difference between the kingdom whereof he treats now and all other kingdoms, even also as the character of it was peculiar. God, indeed, furnisheth kings with authority, yet are they not sanctified as David was, that the holy anointing should mark them as Christ's vicegerents. We have indeed, heretofore, seen them called gods, Ps. lxxxii. 1 and 6, because they both hold their place by God's pleasure, and also after a sort represent him, because all dominion centres in him alone. But yet they want the sacred majesty by which David rose superior to all others, that there should be an image of God's only-begotten Son. Besides this, he justly avouches that the kingdom was given otherwise to him than to other earthly kings, who, though they entitle themselves to reign by the grace of God, yet by no means consider within themselves that they are maintained by God's hand, but rather imagine that they reign either by their own policy, or by right of inheritance, or by the favour of fortune, and therefore in respect of themselves their calling is for the most part not lawful. And forasmuch as they think not that they are beholden to God for that which they have received from him, God's commission is not directed properly to them. But David, who was well assured in himself that God had chosen him, and had held himself modestly in a private state until he was commanded by God's voice to reign, does not without cause exempt himself from the common sort of kings; as if he should say that God was the author of his reigning. However, that this cannot in all respects be fitly applied even to David, appears by Christ's answer, which is read in Matt. xxii. 44. For when the Pharisees had said that Christ should be the son of David, he objected, *How then doth David call him*



*Lord?* And there is no cause why the Jews should set up a din that Christ used a cavil, because David speaks not in his own name, but in the people's. This exception is easy to be disproved. For although it should be admitted that the Psalm was made for the common use of the whole church, yet, as David himself was one of the number of the godly, and a member of the body under the head, he could not separate himself from it. Nay rather, he could not endite a song to others but that he himself also must bear a part in it. Also it is worth while to mark another thing; for he takes for granted the principle or axiom which was then admitted, namely, that David spoke by the spirit of prophecy, and so prophesied of Christ's future kingdom. This being presupposed, doubtless it is to be gathered that he had an eye to Christ, who was to be manifested afterwards, because he is the supreme and only head of the church. Whence also it follows that there was something more excellent in Christ than his manhood, in respect of which he is called the Lord of his father David. And this is better confirmed in the second part of this verse. For though the kings of the earth, after some sort, sit at God's right hand, in whose name they hold their sovereignty, yet here is expressed some higher thing, namely, that there is peculiarly chosen one king that obtains the next degree of power and sovereignty to God, of which dignity there appeared but a small sparkle in David, but the perfect brightness shone forth in Christ. For seeing that God's right hand is far above all angels, it follows that he who is placed there is preferred above all creatures. But we will not say that the angels were abased so as to be placed lower than David. What then remains, but that by the spirit of prophecy Christ's throne is exalted on high above all the principalities of heaven? And it is a similitude borrowed from men; because as in the world, he that is second to a king sits at his right hand, even so the Son of God, by whose hand the Father ruleth the whole world, is by this sitting metaphorically adorned with supreme dominion. *Until I make, &c.* Here the prophet avouches, that although Christ's enemies make insurrection on all sides to trouble his kingdom, yet shall he get the upperhand of all obstacles. Meanwhile he gives an inkling that Christ's kingdom shall not be at peace until he have subdued many and sundry enemies. Therefore, though the whole world put their engines in work to overturn Christ's throne, yet David says it shall stand unmoved; and whosoever rise up against it shall in the end be thrown down. Let us bear in mind, therefore, that though innumerable enemies conspire against the Son of God, and en-

deavour to overthrow his kingdom, yet shall it be to no purpose, because they shall not prevail against God's immutable decree, but rather, they shall be cast under Christ's feet by the immeasurable power of God. But now as this prophecy will not be fulfilled before the last day, Christ's kingdom must of necessity be assaulted by sundry enemies from time to time even till the end of the world, according as will be said a little afterwards. *Bear thou rule in the midst of thine enemies.* Moreover, the particle *until* signifies not what shall come to pass after the final overthrow of Christ's enemies. Indeed Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 24, says, *he shall then deliver unto God and the Father the kingdom that he received at his hand*; but he means not by these words that he shall lay down his authority and become a private person. All he denotes is the manner of his reigning, that is, that his Divine majesty shall be more apparent. However, mention is here made of the reprobates only, who fall under Christ's feet to their own destruction; because that whereas by nature the whole race of men are opposed to Christ, he subdueth and humbleth some to willing obedience, so that afterwards he may advance them into the fellowship of his own glory; and throweth down others, so that they may lie for ever fallen.

2 *The Lord shall send, &c.*] He not only confirms in other words what he had spoken erewhile, but also adds this further, that Christ shall reign far and wide because God shall extend his sceptre afar off. Now though David made many of the neighbouring nations tributary to him, yet if his kingdom be compared to other monarchies, it was always enclosed within narrow bounds. But there is an implied antithesis, as if he had said that Christ shall not be King in mount Sion only, for God shall stretch out its greatness to remote regions of the world. And therefore it is called the sceptre of power. For this was a wonderful matter, that when all the whole world in a manner strove against Christ, yet was his kingdom nevertheless spread abroad. Upon the whole, David here strengthens the minds of the godly, lest they might quail through the furious daring and amid the terrifick raging of those who shall presume to disturb Christ's kingdom; because the all-conquering might of God shall exert itself to maintain the glory of this sacred throne. Whenever, therefore, we are harassed with manifold disquietudes, let us learn to lean on this support: that, how much soever the world may rave, yet its hands cannot reach to pull down Christ from the right hand of the Father. And forasmuch as Christ reigneth not for himself, but for our welfare, we shall be safe and sound

under the protection of so invincible a king. It is, indeed, a hard lot; but as it is God's pleasure to exercise us in continual warfare, and to beset Christ's kingdom with enemies, let us prepare ourselves to patience and meekness; and upon trust of God's help let us fearlessly trample on the fury of the whole world. From hence also is elicited the calling of the Gentiles. For except God had pronounced that which we hear in this place concerning the amplitude of Christ's kingdom, we should not have been of the number of his people at this day. But as the wall is broken down, and the Gospel published, we are gathered together into the body of his church, and Christ's power is shed abroad to maintain and defend us.

3 *Thy people, &c.*] Here he commends Christ's kingdom, as well for the forward and cheerful obedience of the people that are under it, as for the multitude of them. The word נְדָבוֹת often signifies, *willing oblations* or *freewill offerings*, but in this place the meaning is, that the chosen people and such as are reckoned to be of Christ's flock in deed, shall be willing people, so as to offer themselves to obey voluntarily and freely. And he says, *in the day of thine army*; that is, as often as there shall be summoned any solemn and lawful assemblies, or the king will take account of his people; which might be expressed in French, *Au jour des montres*. Others translate it, *in the day of power*. But the former translation is more applicable; namely, that whensoever Christ list to gather his people together, they will forthwith be ready at his beck, although they be not compelled by irresistible command. Further to assure us that this kingdom is consecrated to God above all other kingdoms, he adds, *the beauties or honours of holiness*; as if he should say, they who shall become Christ's subjects shall not come as it were into the presence of some worldly king, but as of God himself, and the aim of all shall be to render worship to God. *Out of the womb from the morning, &c.* To declare the particular expositions of this place were to no purpose. For when I shall have adduced the true and natural sense, I shall not need to spend much labour in disproving the other. I have no doubt whatever that David commends here God's blessing in augmenting Christ's people, and therefore the childhood or issue that shall spring up, is likened by him to *dew*, because it shall grow beyond the ordinary manner. For like as all men marvel that the earth is moist, when notwithstanding the fall of dew is not seen, but escapes the eyes of beholders, even so David says that Christ shall have incredible issue born to him, which shall cover the whole earth. Therefore the *dew of childhood* is applied to the

youth itself, which, after the manner of the dew, falls down in greater abundance than may be numbered. For the word ילדות is a noun of multitude. If any one desire to have the sense of the words more distinctly, he may resolve them thus: That an innumerable issue shall come out of his womb, like as the dew drops down from the morning. That this was not unadvisedly foretold, experience shews. For it were incredible that so great a multitude should be gathered under Christ's dominion in so short a time, yea, and only by the voice of the Gospel, considering that the whole world opposed it furiously. And that old men, or men well stricken in years, being newly converted to Christ, should be called children new born from the womb, is no marvel, for the spiritual regeneration makes all the godly to become like infants, according as Peter teaches, 1 Pet. ii. 2. So also in Isaiah, liii. 10, it is said that Christ shall see a longlived seed, and there is promised an inconceivable fruitfulness of the church under the reign of Christ. Thus much concerning the reason of the name. Truly it were a wonder that there should be any number, though but small, gathered out of the dregs of the world, which contains only the children of wrath; but it is a double wonder that an almost innumerable multitude of men are begotten again unto Christ by the Holy Ghost and the Gospel. But we must bear in mind, that to run cheerfully to execute God's commandments, and to be ruled by his Spirit, is an honour that he vouchsafeth only to his chosen. For Christ will acknowledge none for his, but such as will take his yoke upon them willingly, and come into his presence when the signal is given. Furthermore, lest any man may think himself discharged by eye-service, this doctrine must also be added; that Christ will not be worshipped with outward pomp, but with true holiness, such as he himself teacheth us to bring into God's sight.

4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent him, Thou art a priest for ever according to the manner of Melchisedek.

4 *The Lord hath, &c.*] This verse proves sufficiently, that the person here spoken of is no other than Christ. For when the Jews, to mystify the prophecy, translate כֹּהֵן, a prince, it is too poor, and moreover small. I grant that noble men, or such as are of the blood royal, are called כְּהֹנִים. For what, worthy of Christ himself, would David have spoken, in honouring him but with the title of a noble, which is inferior to the state of a king? Again, what would this mean,

that he is an everlasting prince, and after the order of Melchisedek? There is no doubt, therefore, but that the Holy Ghost designateth some singular thing, that may discern and separate this king from all other kings. Moreover, it is a known title wherewith Melchisedek is garnished by Moses in Gen. xiv. 18. I grant, indeed, that in old time, even among the heathen nations, the kings discharged the function of priest. But as Melchisedek worshipped the only one God aright, he is called the priest of the most high God. Now God would not have these offices combined among his people. Therefore when Uzziah, who was David's lawful successor, took upon him to offer incense to God, he was stricken with a leprosy; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21. The case, therefore, stood otherwise with David's offspring, than it did with Melchisedek. And it is easy to be gathered that this difference is noted, because in this new king the sacred function of the priesthood shall be joined with the crown and chair of state. For surely the imperial majesty was not so great in that obscure petty prince Melchisedek that only in respect thereof he should be set forth as an exemplar. For Salem, the sole seat of his dominion, was then but an obscure little town, where he reigned by sufferance, so that there was nothing in him worth noting, but the joining of the priesthood and principedom. For ambition caused the heathen kings to seize the honour of priesthood, with the object of procuring reverence. But Melchisedek sustained both characters by the command of God. Truly to us the apostle's authority ought to be enough to put us out of doubt that David meant so. And let the Jews battle it as pertinaciously as they please, yet manifest reason demonstrates, that the said beauty of holiness, whereof mention was made before, is described here more evidently, and that thereto is added a decisive and singular mark, which by the honour of the priesthood may advance Christ above other kings, and therewith make a difference between his priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. To this is added God's oath, who truly is not wont to interpose his sacred name in trifling matters: nay, to teach us by his own example, to swear soberly and reverently, he never sweareth but upon weighty and earnest cause. Now if God had sworn that the Messiah should have been the captain and governor of his people, as Melchisedek was, it had been an unpalatable profanation of his name. But now that it appears that there was denoted some rare and singular thing, one may gather what a momentous matter Christ's priesthood is, which is ratified by God's oath. And truly our salvation hinges upon that point. For were it not for our reliance upon Christ our Mediator, we were all shut out from God's

presence. But as in praying we have need of nothing more than confidence, God not only allureth us to him, but also by interposing an oath hath assigned us a patron to procure us favour. Therefore, such as shut the gate on themselves, charge God with lying, and even with perjury. And justly does the apostle avouch, that by this means the Levitical priesthood was abrogated; for as long as that stood in force, God would not have sworn that there should be a new order of priesthood, unless there were about to be some alteration. Nay rather, when he promises a new priest, there is no doubt but he is preferred before all others, and also is such a one as shall abolish the order then admitted. Some translate *דברתי*, *according to my word*; whose opinion I do not utterly reject. For thus David would say, that Melchisedek's priesthood was founded upon God's calling and commandment. But as the letter *י* is often superfluous, I chose rather to translate it simply *manner*, according also as the majority of interpreters incline. However, as the likening of Christ to Melchisedek has not been comprehended by many of the ancient writers of the church, we must learn of the apostle what is like in them, whence it will be easy to gather how stupidly they blundered about it. For what can be more preposterous than to give no heed to all the mysteries of which the Holy Ghost hath treated by the mouth of the apostle, and to catch hold of one thing which the Holy Ghost speaketh not of? For they philosophize only about the bread and wine, the offering whereof, according to them, is common to them both. But Melchisedek offered bread and wine to Abraham, to sustain him on his march, and not to God, for a sacrifice. Neither is there an offering of bread and wine in the holy Supper, as they have falsely supposed, but a partaking of it in common among the faithful. And as for the present place, the similitude is to be held chiefly in the everlastingness of the priesthood, according also as the portion *לעולם* teaches us. Therefore as Moses describes Melchisedek to be as a certain heavenly man, even so David, by likening Christ to him, means that his priesthood shall be without end. Whence it follows, which also the apostle discusses, that as he is not impeded by death from executing his office, he hath no successor, whereby is confuted the accursed sacrilege of the popish mass. For that the popish priests may reconcile men to God, they are fain to bereave Christ of the honour that his father hath given him.

5 The Lord at thy right hand hath broken kings  
in the day of his wrath.



6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *all* with ruins; he shall break the head over a mighty land.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up his head.

5 *The Lord at thy, &c.*] Here David sets forth Christ's terrible power to drive his enemies before him; and by this means he maintains that although he be hemmed in on all sides with crowds of deadly enemies, yet shall their wicked attempts not prevent God from defending the king whom he hath set up. Notwithstanding, the portion *the day of wrath*, is to be noted; whereby we are admonished to bear the cross patiently, if God dissemble for a time when the cruelty and fury of enemies rages, because he knoweth the ripe and meet time of revenge. Afterwards, he makes Christ ruler over the Gentiles, as if he should say he was not chosen king to reign only over the people in Judah, but also to hold remote nations under his subjection; according as has been said in Psalm ii. 8. Moreover, as there would be many disobedient and rebellious as well in all regions of the earth as within the bounds of Judah, he treats also of their destruction; as if he should say, whosoever should resist Christ, must be quelled together with their hardness.

7 *He shall drink, &c.*] Many interpreters expound this verse, in my judgment, too harshly, That the number of the slain shall be so great, that their blood shall run like a brook, with the drinking whereof Christ the conqueror shall be satisfied. Not a whit more correctly others take it allegorically for *miseries* and *sorrows*, as if it had been said that Christ should in this transitory life be subject to many afflictions: but rather, it is a similitude taken from valiant and strong captains, who when they chase their enemies in haste are not over nice, but are content to drink of any brook that they meet with in their way, yea, and that as they pass, so that they quench their thirst out of the stream standing. For in thiswise did Gideon find out the stout-hearted and warlike soldiers, conjecturing those to be but cowards that kneeled down to drink, and therefore he sent them home again: Judges, vii. 5. Therefore I doubt not but David figuratively attributes warlike strength to Christ, denying that he shall rest to drink, because as he pursues his course he shall drink of the river but by snatches: by which commendation he meant to strike terror into his enemies, that they might know that in this hasting, destruction draws near them. If any one ask, Where, then, is that spirit of



mercy and meekness wherewith the scripture in other places teaches us that he shall be endued? Isaiah, lxi. 1; I answer, that like as a shepherd is meek towards his sheep, but fierce and terrible towards wolves and thieves, even so Christ doth affectionately and tenderly cherish such as commit themselves to his keeping; but those who of wilful malice shake off his yoke, shall feel with what terrible might he is armed. Therefore, as we have seen in Psalm ii. 9, that there is in his hand an iron rod to break in pieces all the refractoriness of the world, so also is he said to be sanguinary in revenging his enemies. Wherefore the more heedfully must we beware, that we by our stubborn and intractable dispositions provoke not his anger when he allureth us gently unto him.

## PSALM CXI.

*The title may serve as an argument. However, that he may the better encourage all men to praise God, he himself shews them the way by his example. Afterwards he rehearses briefly the manifold benefits which he vouchsafed in old time to his faithful ones, and still bestows upon them continually. Now the Psalm is arranged alphabetically, but so that every verse contains two letters. The beginning of the first verse is N, and in the next half-strain is put the letter J. Only the two last verses are not divided into half-strains, but each of them contains three letters: which, however, he will find to be done by oversight, whosoever shall narrowly examine the context. For if one make three verses of two, the sentences cohere perfectly. And therefore the copyists did wrong in not paying attention to the prophet's distinction.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. N I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, J in the congregation and assembly of the just.

2 J Great are the works of the Lord, 7 sought out of all that have a desire to them.

3 7 Beauty and comeliness is his work, 1 and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 1 He hath made a memorial to his wonders, 7 the Lord is merciful, and full of compassion.

1 *I will praise, &c.*] The prophet offers himself as a leader to others in singing God's praises; because this is the best and most effectual way of exhortation. And of this sentence there are two members; first, that the prophet

will set forth God's praises heartily, and with unfeigned affection of mind; and secondly, that he will do it openly in the congregation of the godly. And worthily does he begin with the heart, because it is better to praise God inwardly and without witness, than to shout with a dissembling heart, and to thunder out his praise with full throat. However, he that will be thankful to God secretly by himself, will also at the same time burst forth into open speech: for otherwise God is defrauded of half his honour. The prophet, therefore, purposed to praise God first *with all his heart*, that is to say, with a sound and unfeigned heart. For he promises not to execute his duty thoroughly to the full, but only denies that he will be like the hypocrites, who coldly and with a double heart, or rather guilefully, exercise only their tongue in setting forth God's praise. And this must be noted, lest despair should discourage any man if he bring not such perfection of heart as were to be wished. For howsoever maimed our praises be, yet cease they not to please God, if we exert ourselves unfeignedly to perform this service of godliness. Then follows the other part, where he promises to set forth God's praises before men. And though the word **סוד** signify *a secret meeting*, yet I think that two synonymous words are employed here. Meanwhile, if any one would take it in a more refined sense, let him use his own discretion. And he says, *in the congregation of the just*, because the chief object of holy assemblies is, that the true worshippers of God should offer him the sacrifice of praise, according as in Psalm, lxxv. 1, it is said, *Upon thee O Lord, doth praise attend in Sion.*

2 *Great are the works, &c.*] Now he gives us to understand, that there is sufficient matter of praise to God in his works, which, though he name now in general, yet will he anon, by a more distinct explanation, restrain to the government of the church. However, as this greatness of God's works is known to few, but commonly shuns the eyes of men, the prophet ascribes the ignorance thereof to the dulness and unthankfulness of the world, because few deign to consider what great wisdom, goodness, justice and power shine forth in them. Notwithstanding, the interpreters vary in the second part of the verse: for some translate it, *sought out to all the desires of them*. And truly **פָּסַח** signifies *good pleasure*: but as that sense is somewhat harsh, it will more correctly be taken adjectively, for *desirous*, or *longing for*. As the participle *sought out*, although **פָּסַח** signify properly *to search*, yet the works of the Lord are called **פְּסוּחִים**, as it were *perceived* or *found out*; like as Isaiah, lxxv. 1, *I was found of them that sought me not*. Now to return to the

prophet's meaning; because few apply their mind to consider God's works, the prophet teaches us that thereby comes to pass, that the greater part see not in broad daylight. For when he says that the excellence of God's works is known to all men that are desirous of it, he means that none are ignorant of it but such as wilfully shut their eyes, or rather with malicious contempt suppress the light. However, the measure of our understanding is to be considered: for we know that as long as the faithful wander upon the earth, their minds are too feeble and dull to penetrate to the hidden height of God's works. But howsoever incomprehensible is the immensity of God's wisdom, uprightness, justice, might, and mercy, in his works; yet the faithful have such a taste of the knowledge of them as suffices to glorify God. Only let us learn to begin with reverence, so that we may find a favour in God's works, which become of no account with the reprobates through impious disdain. Because the Greek interpreter has translated it, *sought out into all his wills*; Austin inquires with philosophic subtlety how there may be more wills of God than one, or at least how it may seem so to us. And indeed it is a profitable doctrine, that though God manifest his will in his law, yet is there another secret determination, whereby he governeth mankind in a wonderful manner. But that pertains nothing to the present place.

3 *Beauty and comeliness, &c.*] Others translate it *brightness*: the effect is, that whatsoever God doeth, is full of glorious majesty. And in the second member he defines this comeliness and beauty more plainly, inasmuch as God's justice is apparent in all places. For it is God's will, not only that there should be exhibited in his works such an assurance of his mightiness and sovereignty, as might strike all men's minds with awe; but also he offereth his justice to be seen in suchwise, as that it may allure us with its charms. And this title of commendation is set against the noisy slanders of the ungodly, wherewith they wickedly deface the glory of God's works as much as in them lies. In the next verse he commends peculiarly the wonders wherein God hath chiefly manifested his power. And *to make a memorial to his wonders*, imports as much as to do things worthy of remembrance, or to do such things as that the fame of them may never decay. And as just now he exhorted us to consider his justice, so now he commends his grace and mercy, chiefly in his wonders, and that in nearly the same sense; because that justice of his which he sheweth in preserving his servants, flows out of the fountain of his free love.

5 He hath given a portion to them that fear him : he will remember his covenant for ever.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, to give unto them the heritage of the heathen.

7 The works of his hands are truth and judgment : all his statutes are soothfast.

8 *They are* established for evermore, and are done in truth and equity.

5 *He hath given, &c.*] Because the church is a mirror of God's mercy and justice, the prophet applies to her by name that which he has said of them both. Neither was it his purpose to treat of any kind of God's justice whatsoever, but of that justice which he displays peculiarly towards his chosen. Now, therefore, he adds that God hath a care of his people, to provide beforehand for their wants. פֶּרֶךְ is often taken for *a prey*; and others translate it *meat*: but I preferred the word *portion*, in which sense also it is taken Prov. xxx. 8, and xxxi. 15; as if he should say, God had given his people whatsoever they had need of, and that this had been as it were a liberal allowance. For we know that the people of Israel were enriched, not by their own industry, but by God's blessing, as if a householder should deal corn and victuals among his household. In the second member he assigns the cause of this care and liberality; namely, for that he meant to prove by the effect, that his covenant was not disannulled or in vain. And this is to be marked diligently; that as in old time he dealt so lovingly with the people of Israel in respect of the free covenant, even so the benefits that he bestoweth upon us, flow not from any other source than that he hath adopted us to be his people. Moreover, he says that the remembrance of his covenant is always fresh in his mind, because God is never weary of dealing beneficently with his people. And as he prolongeth the testimonies of his grace from day to day, even to the last; so that our faith may be answerable to his steadfastness, it must not be fleeting, but climb above life and death. The next verse is added instead of an exposition, that God manifested to his people the power of his works, by giving them the heritage of the heathen. Indeed he uses the word *shew*; but he means a real shewing. For the possession of the Holy Land was not gotten by man's power, but delivered them by heavenly power and by many miracles; as if God should openly have witnessed to the children of Abraham, with what incomparable power he is endued. Hereto also pertains it, that against many

nations he matches that one people, who surely had never prevailed against so many enemies, but upon assurance of help from heaven.

7 *The works of his hands, &c.*] In the first part he cries out that God is known to be faithful and upright in his works; and afterwards he commends the same truth and uprightness in the doctrine of the law; as if he should say, There is a most goodly agreement between the sayings and doings of God, because he is seen to be everywhere faithful and just. Now though the deliverance of the people in old time were a notable proof of this, yet I doubt not but that under the name of works the prophet has comprehended the continual governing of the church, because God hath not ceased to shew daily that he is just and true, and to hold on this course without weariness. And though it were a greater thing among men for any one to be found just rather in deed than in words, yet as the doctrine of the law was the life and salvation of the people, it is not beside the purpose that the prophet insists upon this second part in many words, saying that all his statutes are soothfast, and that they endure for ever, and that they are perfectly framed according to the strict rule of faithfulness and right. And truly, if God had not bound his people to him by the holy band of his law, the fruit of their deliverance had been very slender, yea, and that benefit had withered away presently. Let us therefore note, that the chief place is given here to the doctrine, because it gave life by avouching the eternal love of God.

9 He sent deliverance to his people: he commanded his covenant for ever. Holy and terrible is his name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do them: his praise endureth for ever.

9 *He sent deliverance, &c.*] He repeats, in other words, what he had spoken already. And because their deliverance was the beginning of their salvation, he sets down that in the first place, and afterwards adds the confirmation thereof in the law, whereby it came to pass that God's adoption could never fail. For although God had made his covenant in old time with Abraham, which was also the cause of their deliverance, yet is this title of commendation referred to the law, whereby the covenant was established that it could never be disannulled. The effect comes to this; that God shewed himself a gracious father not one day only, in de-

livering his people, but also established his favour by the promulgation of the law, that the hope of eternal life should evermore dwell in the church. Moreover, you must bear in mind what I have warned you of already, and must be repeated more largely again in Psalm cxix., where the law is treated of; namely, that the bare commandments must not always be seized upon, because the Holy Ghost hath an eye chiefly to the promises founded in Christ, by which promises God, gathering his chosen people to himself, hath begotten them anew to eternal life.

10 *The fear of the Lord, &c.*] After the prophet has preached of God's benefits, and garnished the law with just titles of commendation, he now exhorts the faithful to the reverence of God, and to zeal in observing the law. In calling *the fear of God* the beginning or source of wisdom, he condemns all those of foolishness that yield not themselves obedient to God. As if he should say, They are all brute beasts and know not the first elements of true wisdom, who are not thoroughly tinctured with the fear of God, and frame not their life according to his law; a point which is to be marked advisedly. For whereas all men covet to be wise, almost the whole world set light by God, and please themselves in their own unhallowed cunning. Therefore, since all the worst men are thought to be wise above others, and, swelling with the confidence thereof, harden themselves against God, the prophet pronounces that all the wisdom of the world is but as smoke, or an empty shadow, without the fear of God. And surely whosoever know not to what end they live, must needs be fools, and out of their wits. But the end to which we are born, and for which we live, is this, that we should occupy ourselves in God's service. Therefore there is no worse blindness, no insensibility more brutish, than when we despise God and turn our affections another way. For how much soever worldly men excel in craft, yet want they the chief thing, that is to say, true godliness. To the same purpose pertains that which is added forthwith, *that such as keep God's commandments have a good understanding*. And there is a great latent force in the adjective חָכָם; for in disproving the foolish persuasion we have spoken of, the prophet tacitly reproves those that are perversely keen, as if he should say, I grant they are commonly accounted wise that take good care of their own interests, that know how to make a good market, and that are shrewd in holding themselves in favour with the world, yea, and beguile others. But what and if I grant them this name? yet is their wisdom unprofitable and untoward, because soundness of mind shews itself in keeping the law.



And now instead of the fear of God, here is put *the keeping of his commandments*. For though nearly all men without exception boast that they fear God, yet is nothing more rife among them than contempt of the law. Worthily therefore does the prophet teach us, that the true proof of fearing God, is if we take his yoke upon us willingly, and suffer ourselves to be ruled by his word. The word *beginning* has deceived some, so that they have thought the fear of God to be called the *first entrance into wisdom*, as it were the alphabet, because it prepares men for true godliness. But that is trifling, as in another place it is called *wisdom*: Job, xxviii. 28. For *fear* is not taken here for the element or rudiment of godliness, as it is taken in the first canonical epistle of St. John, iv. 18, but it comprehends the whole of godliness, or the service of God. The close of the Psalm needs no explanation: for the prophet means only this, that the faithful should understand that nothing is better for them all their life long than to praise God.

## PSALM CXII.

*Forasmuch as the greater part of the world hopes to prosper by ill-doing, and gain is commonly sought by rapine, fraud, and all manner of wrong-dealing, the prophet reckons up the blessings of God which are seen in the pure worshippers of God, that we may know that the endeavour to live godly and righteously is not without the goodliest reward.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; he will delight greatly in his commandments.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the righteous shall be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his houses: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

1 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] Although the word of encouragement is prefixed, yet have I told you heretofore that the prophet has a further aim than to exhort the faithful to sing God's praises. For as it is everywhere accounted happiness to work mischief by wicked arts and wrong-dealing, and although innocence be now and then praised, yet scarce one in a hundred follows it, while all men think that they will be wretched unless, confounding all distinction of right and wrong, they plunder wherever they can. The prophet,



on the contrary, shews that there is more to be hoped for from God's fatherly favour than all kinds of misdealings, and calls us back to the cultivation of uprightness and beneficence, by setting the hope of reward before us. I explain the words in thiswise: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth himself in his commandments*; so that the prophet may in the second member define wherein the fear of God consists. And this addition was very needful, as we have observed in the end of the last Psalm. For whereas all men heedlessly despise God's law, yet is nothing more rife with them than to pretend the fear of God. This wickedness is very well reprov'd by the prophet when he admits no man among the worshippers of God but him that sets his mind to the keeping of the law. Neither is the word *יִדְּרָא* without force, which signifies as much as *to have a pleasure*, as they commonly term it. And I have translated it *to delight*. For the prophet distinguishes the willing and cheerful endeavour to keep the law from slavish and constrained obedience; because it is not enough to give ear to God's law, unless we embrace it gladly, so that the love of it may, with its charms, overcome all the enticements of the flesh. Therefore, till a man has advanced thus far, that his delight in the law keeps him cheerfully in his duty, he shall not be accounted a true observer of the law. I now return to the whole sentence. The prophet, in affirming that the worshippers of God are happy, warns us on the contrary part that it is a pestilent fallacy, wherewith the wicked beguile themselves in feigning to themselves a counterfeit happiness from evil-doing.

2 *His seed shall, &c.*] The prophet, to prove the sentence that he has alleged, reckons up the testimonies of God's grace wherewith he is wont to reward his worshippers. And first of all he says, not only that God's fatherly loving-kindness abides in their person, but also is extended to their posterity; according also as it is said in the law, *I am merciful to a thousand generations in them that love me and keep my commandments*; Exod. xxxiv. 7. And in Ps. ciii. 8, 9, and in other places, we have touched upon this point of doctrine already. But as many men will foolishly measure God's temporal graces all after one rate, we must bear in mind that which I have taught in Ps. xxxvii. 25, that they are dispensed variously, according as it pleaseth God. It happens now and then that a very good man is childless, and yet childlessness in itself is accounted a curse of God. So also many of God's servants are pinched with poverty and neediness, encumbered with sicknesses, and grievously troubled with sundry miseries. We must therefore hold to

the general rule, that according as God knoweth it to be for each man's behoof, he sometimes bestoweth his benefits more largely and sometimes more sparingly on his servants; or rather, sometimes hideth the tokens of his favour, so as to seem to have no regard of his servants at all. Notwithstanding, in this confusedness it evermore appears that it was not said in vain that the godly are blessed and their offspring too. For whereas the wicked purpose nothing but to lord it in the world, and to advance their children above the clouds, God most commonly disappointeth their vain hopes. Again; as the faithful think it enough to bring up their children in the fear of God, that they may live with a little, God, as it were stretching out his hand, lifteth them up aloft. Besides this, in old time the proof of this doctrine was more apparent under the law, because it behoved the rude and weak people to be led on by little and little to a better hope by earthly blessings. And yet if our own vices prevented it not, God's earthly benefits would shine more brightly upon us even at this day also. For what is added by and by, *that wealth and riches shall be in the houses of the righteous*, experience shews not to be uniformly true. For often it happens that honest and holy men hunger and are destitute even of homely food; and that because it would be hurtful to them to be treated more liberally at God's hand, forasmuch as many are unmeet to bear abundance. By the way we may note that the grace which the prophet commends is seen most in this, that the honest and simple are content with their humble estate, whereas worldlings are satisfied with no abundance, though they swallow up the whole world. For true is the old proverb, that the covetous wanteth as well that which he hath as that which he hath not, because he is master of nothing, but is merely the slave of his wealth. Jointly also with this member must be read that which follows, that *the righteousness of good men endureth for ever*. And this is the proper and most decisive difference, because that though the ungodly stuff their houses with great riches for a time, all that heap shall, as the prophet says, *suddenly vanish away at one blast of God's mouth*; Haggai, i. 9. And we daily see how the things that were gotten by rapine and fraud are delivered over to spoil. But innocence is the best and faithfulest keeper of God's blessings to the faithful.

4 Unto the upright, light is risen in darkness : he is merciful, and full of compassion, and righteous.

5 A good man is merciful, and lendeth ; he measureth his words in uprightness.

6 Surely he shall never stagger : the righteous shall be had in remembrance for ever.

7 He shall not be afraid of evil hearing : his heart is set fast, because he putteth his trust in the Lord.

8 His heart is underpropped, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his adversaries.

4 *Unto the upright, &c.*] Whether one should approve of taking the verb *אָרַם* neutrally or actively, the meaning will be the same : although, whichever way you take them, the words admit still of a twofold sense ; either that God keepeth the righteous free from the common miseries, as though the sun should shine in some nook when all the earth besides is covered with darkness ; or that God restoreth to his servants fair weather, although he overcast their minds with heaviness for a time, as the day succeeds the night. If this latter exposition be approved, then by *darkness*, or by the *cloudy and rainy season*, the prophet means the troubles wherewith God exerciseth his servants to patience. And yet the other sense seems the fitter ; namely, that when all the whole world is overwhelmed with miseries, God's grace shineth upon the faithful, so that they feel themselves to be in good and happy plight because God is favourable to them. In this way their estate is properly distinguished from the common lot of men. For although the wicked exult in prosperity, yet as they taste not God's fatherly love, they are blind in the daylight, and in time of adversity are drowned in deadly darkness, doubtless they never enjoy a calm sunshine. But the godly, upon whom God's grace shineth always, although subject to miseries as well as all other men, yet are never overwhelmed with darkness ; and therefore it is not unfitly said that *light arises to them in darkness*. Notwithstanding, if we take the verb *אָרַם* actively, the construction of the words will flow better in one strain. I doubt not the prophet adorns God with these titles, *merciful, full of compassion, and righteous*. Therefore, if we read it neutrally, *light is risen*, the latter member will be a rendering of the cause. For when some expound it that the righteous and gentle darken not the world as the depraved and wicked do, nor yield smoke out of light, but light out of smoke, they wrest the prophet's words too much.

5 *A good man, &c.*] This interpretation is admitted almost by common consent: though I rather incline another way, that *it shall go well with the humane and liberal*: for the prophet's language will thus be better constructed. For his purpose is to shew that worldly men are much deceived when they look for happiness by wicked and unlawful practices, because the only grace of God is the wellspring and cause of all good things. And by this means must be supplied the relative *which*. Therefore he warns us, that such as make haste to enrich themselves by niggardly parsimony and oppressive exactions are beguiled, because the faithful draw God's grace to them by their humanity and beneficence, as it were by a conduit-pipe: for the word טוב is often taken neutrally in the masculine gender. He sets down *lending* as the fruit of mercy: for the usurer lends, but it is to drain the distressed by his deceitful pretence of helping them. God, therefore, promiseth prosperous success to such as are frank-hearted indeed, who succour the poor for compassion's sake, and not to lay snares for them. I take the word דברים, in the end of the verse, for *business*, as David Kimht also does, who is the faithfulest of the rabbins. For to have it understood of speech, were too cold, and the prophet would have spoken more plainly. But this suits very well, that the righteous should measure their affairs by reason and judgment, so that in their household matters they be neither lavish nor niggardly or oversparing, but keep a measure without excess; and secondly, that in bargaining they should always observe the rule of uprightness.

6 *Surely he shall never, &c.*] The causal particle may be taken also in its natural meaning, especially if one read, *It shall go well with the man*, in the upper verse. For he points out more plainly the happiness of which he spoke, that is, first, that God sustaineth the merciful and kind-hearted that they may not be harassed amid the vicissitudes of the world; and secondly, that he maketh their innocence shine forth, and defendeth them from wrongful slanders. And they are said not to *stagger* or *quail*, because though subject to the common inconveniences, yea, and oftentimes seem to sink under the burden of miseries, yet do they inwardly continue firm in their standing, and overcome all adversities by victorious patience. Now though God be the maintainer of their righteousness, yet escape they not the slanders of the wicked; but it is enough that the memorial of them is blessed before God and his angels, and the whole company of the godly.

7 *He shall not be afraid, &c.*] It might seem to be a con-

firmation of the former sentence, as if the prophet had said that the righteous are free from the misreport which the reprobates bring upon themselves by their own fault and offences. But I rather understand it that the righteous are not like the unbelievers, who quake at every breath of rumour, but peaceably and quietly lean upon God's fatherly providence, whatsoever evil tidings are reported. For how comes it to pass that unbelievers are ever driven to and fro, but because they think that while God taketh his ease in heaven, fortune plays her pranks upon earth. Therefore it is no marvel they be abashed and are upset at the noise of a leaf falling: from such unquietness the prophet exempts the faithful, because they depend not upon reports, nor are hindered by fear from calling upon God continually. True it is that God's children are afraid also when any danger threatens them; for if they should be touched with no concern for misfortunes, such indifference would be a mark of insensibility, and not of constancy. But while they acknowledge God to be the keeper of their life, although not divested of all thought and fear, yet in proceeding in their race they commit their welfare to God, to whose will they willingly resign themselves. This is the magnanimity of the righteous, by which the prophet says they despise terrifying reports. Wisely also does he fix the main support thereof in the Lord: for as innumerable deaths besiege us on the right hand and on the left, we must needs be overwhelmed with despair, if this trust succour us not, that we are safe under God's keeping. The right stableness, therefore, is such as the prophet defines, that is, if we put our trust in God: for whereas worldlings make themselves drunk with presumptuous confidence, so much the more do they provoke God's thunderbolts against them, because they forget how frail the condition of man's life is, and doltishly advance themselves in their pride against God. Therefore, *when they shall say, Peace and safety, then shall sudden destruction come upon them; 1 Thess. v. 3.* But the sense of afflictions so puts the faithful in fear and thoughtfulness, that, however, it does not make their hearts quail, because it shakes not off their faith, whereby only they are courageous and strong. To be brief, they are neither iron nor stocks, but their trust which they repose in God is the thing whereby they advance themselves above all thoughtful cares. By this means they keep still their minds tranquil and composed until the full time of vengeance against the reprobates arrive.

9 He hath sprinkled abroad, and given to the

poor; his righteousness endureth for ever: his horn shall be exalted in glory.

10 The wicked shall see it, and be angry; he shall gnash with his teeth, and fret away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.

9 *He hath sprinkled abroad, &c.*] Again he affirms that the righteous are never disappointed of the fruit and reward of their liberality. And first, by *sprinkling*, the prophet means not that they give out some little thing niggardly and grudgingly, according as many think to discharge themselves towards the poor with a small alms, but that they bestow abundantly; that is, so much as need requires, and their own ability allows: for it may be that a liberal heart has not abundance of things. But the prophet means only that the righteous are not so straitlaced as not to be always ready to give a sprinkling. Afterwards he adds therewith, *that they give to the poor*, meaning that they lavish their goods unadvisedly, but use wisdom and discrimination to succour where need is. We know that the world oftentimes praises needless and superfluous expenses that are made for vain ostentation; and therefore riot or ambition wastes an hundredfold more goods than well-regulated liberality bestows. But the prophet teaches that the praise of liberality consists not in indiscriminate lavishness, but in relieving the want of the poor, and in spending money for right and lawful uses. This place is cited by Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 9, where he tells us it is an easy matter with God to give us abundance, whereby our liberality may flow with equal course; which agrees very well with the prophet's meaning. That which follows, that *the righteousness of such a man endureth for ever*, may be taken two ways: for as the headiness of ambition, which goads worldlings to dissipate their goods, deserves not the name of virtue, it will not be inapplicable to suppose that the prophet should praise an uniform course, according as he said before, that *the righteous order their affairs in judgment*. Notwithstanding, if any like better that the fruit of righteousness should be denoted, I willingly assent. And truly it seems to be a repetition of the same sentence which we saw just now. Afterwards the prophet shews in whatwise God by his benefits asserteth the praise of their righteousness, and disappointeth it not of a reward; that is, because *he exalteth their horn*, that is to say, their strength or prosperous estate, more and more.

10 *The wicked shall see it, &c.*] Here follows such an antithesis as we saw in Psalm ii. 5, which more commends



God's gracious goodness towards the faithful. And the prophet means, that though the ungodly cast all feeling of godliness far from them, lest they might think that God governeth worldly affairs, yet shall they see whether they will or no, that the righteous do not in vain give themselves to God's command to cultivate kindness. However much, therefore, they harden themselves, yet he says that they shall plainly see the reward which God will render to his children, so that it shall make them gnash with their teeth and waste away with slow-consuming envy. In the end he adds, *that the wicked shall be disappointed of their lusts*. For whereas they are insatiable and ever longing for this or that, yet is their hope no less presumptuous than their lust is unbridled, and so it comes to pass that they scruple not to swallow up the whole world in their foolish anticipation. But the prophet tells them, that what they thought to be in their hand shall be wrenched from them, so that they shall always go away empty and hungry.

### PSALM CXIII.

*In this Psalm also is ministered matter of praise to God for his providence, because though as he far surmounteth all the heavens in his highness, yet he vouchsafeth to look down upon the earth to care for human kind. And because the inconstancy in things that is seen upon earth troubles many, the prophet warns us, in express words, that in the sudden vicissitudes which happen contrary to all expectation, we must have an eye to God's providence, so that we doubt not but that all things are governed according to his will and pleasure.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise ye the name of the Lord.

2 Blessed be the name of the Lord, from henceforth and for evermore.

3 The Lord's name is to be praised, from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same.

4 The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.

1 *Praise, O ye servants, &c.*] Although the Psalm contain a matter that concerns all men without exception, yet does the prophet speak to the faithful peculiarly, because they only are endued with spiritual eyes to see God's hand. Neither is the repetition superfluous, if we consider how



cold and slow men are in this exercise of godliness. Indeed we confess, all of us, that we are created to praise God's name, but in the mean time his glory lies prostrate among us. And therefore this depraved apathy is justly rebuked; and by the same means the prophet stirs us up to unwearied zeal in praising God. Then must the repeating of the exhortation be referred as well to perseverance as to earnestness. If any one had rather understand, by God's servants, the Levites, who under the law were charged to sing God's praises, I will not make much resistance, provided he exclude not the rest of the faithful, over whom God did in old time set the Levites as leaders and masters, that he might be praised of all his people without exception. And doubtless, if the Holy Ghost speaketh to the Levites by name when God's praises are in hand, it is not on any other ground than that they should go before others by their example, and that the whole church should respond in one holy chorus. But now in these days, seeing we are all of us *a royal priesthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 9, and as Zechariah testifies, xiv. 21, that all the most despicable of the people shall be Levites under the reign of Christ, there is no doubt but the prophet, passing by the unbelievers, who are dumb, allures us in general to perform this service to God.

2 *Blessed be the name, &c.*] The prophet confirms that which I touched upon just now; namely, that God's praises must be continued all our life long. For if God's name be to be praised for ever, at least we ought to endeavour, with all diligence, during so short a space as we have to wander in this world, that the remembrance thereof may flourish when we are dead. In the next verse he extends the glory of God's name into all coasts of the earth. Whence it follows, that our slothfulness is in nowise to be excused, if we sound not out his praises one to another among ourselves. And although, under the law, God could not be rightly praised anywhere else than in Judah, because he was not known but to his chosen people, yet were his works, which were manifestly set forth to all nations, worthy the commendations of the whole world. To the same purpose makes also that which follows concerning the *highness* of God's glory. For what greater unseemliness can there be, than for us to be niggardly and slow in exalting it, seeing it ought to lift up all men's minds to admire it? The prophet therefore extols not God's name so greatly to no purpose, but that we should know there is no room for slothfulness, and that it is an impious silence, if we force not ourselves beyond our strength to magnify him with praises, so that our affection may after a sort mount above the heavens. In

that he says, *He is high above all nations*, there is a covert upbraiding to condemn the sluggishness of the chosen people. For what is more against reason, than that such as are eyewitnesses of God's glory should cease from praising it, seeing it shines forth even among the blind? For though God vouchsafed the light of his heavenly doctrine only to the Jews at that time, yet did he never leave himself without witness, according as Paul says, Acts xiv. 17, and Rom. i. 10. However, this highness was perceived better by the publishing of the Gospel, because then verily the world was gathered together under his dominion.

5 Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath his dwelling on high,

6 And yet humbleth himself to behold *things* in heaven, and in earth?

7 Lifting up the poor out of the dust; out of the dunghill raiseth he the wretched;

8 To set him with the princes, *even* with the princes of his people.

9 Making the barren woman to dwell in a house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord.

5 *Who is like unto, &c.*] Here the prophet, comparing the highness of God's glory and puissance with his immeasurable goodness, draws from thence materials for augmented praise. Not that God's goodness can be separated from his glory; but this distinction is set down in respect of men, to whom God's majesty would of itself be terrible, unless, lovingly condescending to us, he allured us to him by his amiable sweetness. The effect then is, that though God, dwelling above the heavens, be so far from us, yet is this his highness no impediment, but that he sheweth himself near at hand to us, and familiarly careth for our welfare. And in saying that God is high above the heavens, the prophet not only commends his mercy towards men whose estate is mean and abject, but also gives us to understand that he may with good right despise even the angels of heaven, if his fatherly love moved him not to come down and embrace them within his regard. Now if he humble himself in the cause of angels, what is to be said in respect of men, who, creeping upon the earth, are at the same time held and wrapt in filth without end? If any man ask whether God fill not both heaven and earth, the solution is easy;

that there is nothing else taught in these the prophet's words, but that he is able to tread the noblest creatures under his feet, or rather that he may neglect them for their vast distance from him. To be brief, we must learn that it is not from our nearness to him that God careth for us, but because he humbleth himself of his own freewill.

7 *Lifting up the poor, &c.*] Here the prophet commends God's providence in the sudden vicissitudes which are thought to happen by chance. Therefore that things are changed beyond our expectation, says he, is by the appointment of God alone. For if things should proceed always in an uniform course, all men would boast of nature; but now the fluctuation admonishes us that it is God's secret counsel that rules all things. Again, when we are amazed at the suddenness of things unlooked for, straightway we imagine it to be the work of chance. Therefore as we are everywhere niggardly, the prophet bids us to admire God's providence when there happens any strange or unwonted thing. For seeing that neatherds and other of the most despised sort of men have mounted up to the highest authority, reason would that our mind should be awakened the better at such unlooked-for change. Now we understand the prophet's meaning; for he could have set forth the workmanship of heaven and earth as he has done in other places, but as our understandings are purblind in the ordinary course of nature, he says that God's hand is more manifest in his extraordinary works. And he enhances the miracle when he says that the obscure and abject sort of men are not only advanced to any manner of principality, but so advanced as that they have pre-eminence over his holy people, which is a greater matter than to bear rule in other parts of the earth. For the state of the church is the chief and most august stage on which God bringeth forth and displayeth the proofs of his wonderful power, wisdom, and righteousness.

9 *Making the barren, &c.*] He declares another work of God, which though it seem not to be so notable, yet has not less engaged our thoughts; for if a woman that has been barren a long time suddenly bears a great number of children, we are compelled to marvel though we have no sense of God's daily works. The word *הבית* is taken not only simply for a *house*, but also for a *household*, the thing that contains for that which is contained; as the Greeks apply the term *oikos* and the Latins *domus*. The meaning then is, that the woman who before was solitary is endued with fruitfulness, so as to fill her house with children. And he attributes joyfulness to mothers, because though the minds of all are prone to seek riches, or honour, or pleasures, or any manner of advantage, yet is issue preferred before all other

things. Seeing, then, that God not only governeth the accustomed order of nature, but also changeth the courses of things, lifting those up which lay despised, and making the barren woman fruitful, our dulness is worthy of double condemnation, if we are not attentive to consider his hand.

## PSALM CXIV.

*It is a brief description of the deliverance, wherein God put forth a memorable proof of his power and grace, by leading his people out of Egypt into the promised heritage. The ultimate object of it is, that the children of Abraham should yield themselves wholly to God, who, embracing them with his free adoption, purposed that they should be a holy and peculiar people to him.*

1 When Israel went out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from the strange nation,

2 Judah was his sanctification, and Israel his dominion.

3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was turned back.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of sheep.

1 *When Israel, &c.*] Seeing that that deliverance was so glorious a pledge and token of God's love towards the children of Abraham, no marvel though it be so often called to remembrance. And in the opening the prophet tells us that the people whom God had purchased to himself at so costly a price, are no more masters of themselves. For when some interpret it that the tribe of Judah was then sanctified to God, according to this place of Exod. xix. 6, and also this of the First Epistle of Peter, ii. 9; *you are a holy nation, and a royal priesthood*, it seems to me remote from the prophet's meaning. And that which is added immediately after takes away all doubt; namely, that Israel was then subject to God's dominion. For it is a repeating of one self-same sentence in diverse words; and the tribe of Judah is preferred before the rest of the people on account of the distinction of holding the chief place; and yet it is not to be doubted but that the same title wherewith that tribe is honoured peculiarly, pertains to the body of the whole people. And God is said to be sanctified in respect of men, for in himself he is incapable of increase or diminution. And Judah is said to have been his *holiness* or *sanctification*, and *Israel his dominion*, because his holy majesty, which erst was obscured, then drew as many to reverence

it as were witnesses of such incredible power. Now if God set up himself a kingdom, and obtained reverence to his holy name by delivering his people, the people's apathy is inexcusable if they do not exercise themselves in continual meditation of so great a benefit.

3 *The sea saw it, &c.*] He does not go regularly through all the miracles that were wrought at that time, but touching upon them summarily, says that the sea, although a lifeless element and void of sense, was notwithstanding abashed with fear of God's power; and that Jordan did the like, and the very mountains leaped up. Now although the prophet describes the going back of the sea and of Jordan poetically, yet do not his words exceed the measure of the reality. And the sea truly in yielding such obedience to its Maker, did sanctify his name. Jordan by his submission set forth the power of his word, and the mountains by their trembling did bear witness how much they stood in awe of his majesty. But his purpose is no more to commend God's mighty power, than his fatherly care and desire to preserve the church. And therefore he wisely separates Israel from the sea, from Jordan, and from the mountains; according as the case of the elect people, and the case of the dead elements were different.

5 What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest? and thou Jordan, that thou turnedst backward?

6 Ye mountains, *that* ye leaped like rams; and ye hills, like the lambs of sheep?

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

8 Which turned the rocks into pools of water, and the flint into a fountain of water.

5 *What aileth thee, &c.*] The prophet here questions the sea, Jordan, and the mountains in a popular manner, even as erewhile he attributed to them understanding and reverence of the power of God. And by these figures he reproves men's dulness the more sharply if they apply not the understanding wherewith they are endued to the considering of God's works. Yea, even the very sight of the sea, whereof the prophet speaks, will be able and more than able to condemn their blindness. For the sea could not be dried, nor the river Jordan run back, had he not compelled them to obedience by his secret instinct as God. But though his talk be directed to the sea, to Jordan, and the mountains, yet the prophet speaks rather to us, that every

one of us, descending into himself, should diligently and heedfully dwell upon this consideration. And therefore as often as we meet with these words, let each of us answer that so great a change cannot be ascribed to nature or inferior causes, but it is God's hand that shineth manifestly in this behalf. The similitude taken from rams and lambs seems indeed to be far beneath the magnitude of the subject. But it was the prophet's purpose to express in the plainest terms, in what a marvellous manner God shewed forth his power in that matter. For seeing that the stability of the whole earth is grounded after a sort on the mountains, what have they to do with rams or lambs, that they should stir themselves hither and thither with skipping. The prophet therefore does not depreciate the miracle, but in a rude kind of speech he the better imprints the strange signs of God's power on the minds of the illiterate.

7 *Tremble thou earth, &c.*] After he has awakened men's understandings with asking questions, now he adds an answer, which many suppose to be made in the person of the earth itself, because they think the letter ׀ to be the affix of the verb ׀לל, as if the earth should say, It is my duty to tremble at the presence of the Lord. But this fiction cannot stand, because the word *earth* is added immediately after. More correctly, therefore, others teach that the letter ׀ is superfluous here, as it is frequently elsewhere; and they elicit this sense, It is right and proper that the earth should tremble in the presence of her Lord. But as the verb ׀לל is by many translated in the imperative mood, I have willingly followed them. For it is likely that the prophet speaks again to the earth, that he may touch men's minds more to the quick. Notwithstanding the sense is the same as if he had said, Go to; so it ought to be that the earth should tremble at the presence of her king. For there is put the noun ׀לל, which signifies *a lord* or *a master*. Nevertheless, afterwards he adds expressly the name *of the God of Jacob*, whereby he bids all counterfeit gods begone. For considering how ready men are to beguile themselves, it is always to be feared lest they should set up idols instead of the true God. In the end he recites another miracle, whereby God greatly magnified his power again in the wilderness, after the people were passed the Red sea. And by this means he gives us to understand that God's glory appeared not for one day only in the going out of the people, but was manifested continually from time to time in his other works, as when a river gushes suddenly out of the dry rock; Exodus, xvii. 6. True, fountains come trickling out from among rocks and stony places, but to



fetch water out of a dry rock was undoubtedly beyond the order of nature. I will not here take upon me to discuss curiously how the stone was turned into water; the prophet means simply that there flowed water where before was dryness and hardness. Nevertheless it appears hereby how ridiculous the sophists are in feigning a transubstantiation, wherever the scripture says that this or that is changed. For the substance of the stone was not then turned into water, but God in a wonderful manner created water, which flowed out of the dry rock.

### PSALM CXV.

*It is obvious that this Psalm was dictated to the church when it was sorely distressed. For the faithful pray, that though they are unworthy to be heard by God, they may nevertheless be delivered, lest his holy name should be subject to the scoff and reproaches of the Gentiles. Afterwards, having taken heart, they mock at the senselessness of all such as are given to idols; and with holy boasting they magnify their own happiness, in that they are adopted of God, whereupon also they encourage one another to thankfulness.*

1 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth.

2 Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

3 But our God is in heaven; he hath done whatsoever he listed.

1 *Not unto us, Lord, &c.]* Although there is no certainty who was the author of this Psalm, nor when it was composed, yet this beginning shews that the faithful flee unto God in circumstances of extreme distress. They do not utter in express words what their mind is, but insinuate their request indirectly. At the same time they protest that they allege no merits, nor conceive hope of obtaining, otherwise than that God will maintain his own glory by delivering them, because they are things knit together in inseparable union. Although, therefore, they deserve to be repulsed, yet they beseech God that he would not degrade his name to be a laughing-stock to the heathen. They desire, indeed, that solace and help should be administered to their miseries, but because they find nothing in themselves worthy of God's



favour, they appeal to him to maintain his own glory. And it is worth noting, that though we are unworthy that God should regard us, yet must we hope well, because he will glorify his name in saving us, whom he hath adopted on condition of never forsaking us. By the way it is to be noted, that for humility and modesty sake they complain not openly of their miseries, nor begin with their own salvation, but with the glory of God. For as their very misery was a kind of casting off, they were so abashed with shame that they durst not openly crave at God's hand what they wished for, and therefore they have employed the method of insinuation, that God should in respect of his own glory shew himself a father to sinners that had deserved no favour. And as this form of prayer has once been given to the church, as often as we approach God let us remember to strip ourselves of our own worthiness, that his free goodness may hearten us to hope well. Nay rather, even in this behalf, when we desire to be helped, our aim ought to be that the deliverance which we shall have obtained may illustrate God's glory. And it is likely that the promise put them in mind to pray so. For God had said in the time of the captivity, *Not for your sakes, but for mine own sake will I do this*, Is. xlviii. 11; and now they acknowledge that this is their only refuge when all other hopes fail. And by repeating it twice, they shew the better how well assured they are of their own unworthiness, so that if their prayers should happen to be rejected a hundred times, they could not arraign him in their own behalf.

2 *Why should they say, &c.*] Now they declare that God, in preserving his church, would be a maintainer of his own glory, because if he should suffer her to go to wreck, his name would be subject to the godless vauntings of the heathen; for their tongues will be put forth to rail, that the God of Israel was bereft of all power, since he forsaketh his retainers in their utmost distress. Not that God hath need of any such warning, but rather that the faithful might carry back their minds to that holy zeal, of which we have seen heretofore, that *the railings of those that railed upon thee are fallen upon me*: Psalm lxix. 10. For they do not artfully employ rhetorical colours in order to persuade: but they protest that they are in suchwise careful of their own welfare, as that notwithstanding they make more account of God's glory, according as it deserves. Afterwards they allege the reason why it concerned God's glory that they should be saved; namely, because he was the author of the covenant which the ungodly had boasted was abolished and annulled, and thus had declared that it was to no purpose

to have God's favour, and also that his promises were vain. Therefore they charge God with his favour, and also with his faithfulness; both which wicked slanders awaited if he should have disappointed his people, whom he had bound to him by an everlasting bond, and whom he had adopted in his free mercy. At the present time, since God hath made us partakers of his Gospel, and vouchsafed to graft us into the body of his church, it will be lawful for us to allege the same thing ourselves also.

3 *But our God, &c.*] Now the faithful with hallowed daring encourage themselves more to prayer. For we know our prayers are vain if we are tossed about on the waves of doubt. If that blasphemy had pierced into their hearts, the wound would have been fatal. Therefore they set a shield against it betimes, and by reason thereof break off the course of their prayer. By and by we will handle the second member in its proper place, where they mock idols and wicked superstitions of the heathen. But at present it is worth while to weigh thoroughly the several words of this sentence. By placing God in heaven, they enclose him not within any compass of place, nor set barriers about his immeasurable being, but they deny his power to have any end, or to be tied to worldly means. They deny that it is subject to fate or fortune: and, to be short, they submit the whole world to his government, so that he, being far above all obstacles, executeth freely whatsoever he listeth: which is expressed more evidently in the member *he doeth whatsoever he listeth*. How then doth God dwell in heaven? because the world is subject to his will, so that nothing is able to withstand him, in fulfilling whatsoever he hath decreed. Now it is a doctrine of signal importance, that God doeth whatsoever he listeth, provided it be applied to the true and lawful use of it. I give this warning, lest curious or froward persons should after their manner eagerly take occasion to abuse a sound doctrine to the support of brainsick ravings. And we daily see too much of the wantonness of man's wit in this behalf. For many prate without shame or modesty of this mystery, which it would become them to embrace with singular reverence. Moreover, that the profit of this doctrine may redound to us, it behoves us to mark why God is said to do whatsoever he listeth. First, because God is of full ability to maintain the welfare of his church; and, secondly, because that as he holdeth all creatures under his hand, no impediment can hinder him from bringing his purposes to effect. Although, therefore, the faithful see all the ways of welfare foreclosed against them, yet take they heart, because God not only is above all impediments, but also maketh use of the same to smooth the way for himself.

Meanwhile, this also must be borne in mind, that all things are done by the appointment of God only, and that nothing happens by chance. Only it behoved to speak thus much beforehand concerning the use of the doctrine, that our minds may withhold themselves from imagining anything unworthy of God's glory, as erratic spirits are wont to do. The said principle being admitted, let us not be ashamed to confess freely that God so governeth all things by his eternal purpose, as that nothing can be done but by his will and ordinance. Aptly, therefore, and ingeniously, does Austin prove by this text that the things which seem to us unreasonable, happen not simply by God's sufferance, but even by his appointment and determination. For if God do whatsoever he list, why should he suffer the things to be done which he listeth not? Why restraineth he not the devil, and all the wicked that fight against him? If he be imagined to hold an intermediate place between doing and suffering, so as to tolerate what he does not will to be done, he will therefore be at rest in heaven, as the Epicureans dream. But if we grant that God is endued with forecast, so that he regardeth and governeth the world, whereof he is the maker, and neglecteth no part of it, it will follow that whatsoever is done, he willeth it to be done. They that prate that God by this means would be the author of evil, are perverse logicians. Neither shall they by their barking, if they are foul curs, bring to pass either that the prophet has lied, or that they may wrest the government of the world out of his hand. If nothing be done but by God's counsel and determination, he seemeth not, say they, to disallow sin; but he hath his secret causes unknown to us, why he will have that done which the froward do, but yet not according to their sinful affection. It was God's will that Jerusalem should be destroyed, and the will of the Chaldeans also was to do the same, but after a different manner. And although he often term the Babylonians his hired soldiers, and say they were stirred up by his hiss, Isaiah v. 26; yea, and call them the sword of his own hand, yet may we not therefore say they were his fellows, because the intent or purpose was far different; that is, that in the destruction of Jerusalem God's justice might shine forth, and the lust, covetousness, and cruelty of the Chaldeans might worthily condemn themselves. Though, therefore, it is God's will to have done whatsoever is done in the world, yet is it not his will to have any evil done. For though we are not able to comprehend his counsel, yet is it evermore grounded upon most excellent reason. But if his only will be enough for us to assure us for a certainty, that although his judgments be a bottomless deep, Psalm xxvi. '7, yet most perfect righteousness reigns in

them. This foolishness will be far more learned than all the acumen of those that dare measure his works by their own capacity. Furthermore, this also is to be noted again, that if God list to do whatsoever he doeth, then he listeth not to do whatsoever is not done, which is especially profitable to be known. For often, because God winketh and holdeth his peace at the afflictions of the church, we demand wherefore he suffereth it to pine, seeing it is in his hand to succour it. Covetousness, deceit, forswearing, cruelty, ambition, pride, lechery, drunkenness, and, in short, all kind of corruptness reigns at this day in the world, all which would cease at once if it pleased God to apply a remedy. Wherefore, when God seemeth to be asleep, or destitute of power to help us, let this be a bridle to make us tarry his leisure; namely, that he is unwilling to do it so speedily, because he knows that delay and procrastination are behoveful for us: willing, certainly, to wink at and endure for a time what he could redress in a moment if he pleased.

4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

5 They have mouth, and speak not: they have eyes, and see not.

6 They have ears, and hear not: they have noses, and smell not.

7 They have hands, and feel not: they have feet, and walk not: neither cry they with their throat.

8 They that make them shall be like unto them; *and so shall they all be* whosoever trust in them.

4 *Their idols are, &c.*] This matching of contraries must be referred to this end, that the godly may the better confirm their faith, whereby they stay themselves upon God alone; because whatsoever of godhead men's minds conceive beside him is the mere coinage of folly and delusion. For surely it boots not a little to the confirmation of true godliness, to know the error and madness of the whole world; while on the other part a God is presented to our minds, whom we know assuredly to be the maker of heaven and earth, and to be worshipped not in vain, or at random. Moreover, that he may the more effectually humble the insolence of the ungodly, who durst proudly despise God and his chosen people, he disdainfully derides their false gods; first calling them idols, that is to say, things of nought, and afterwards proving that they are void of life and sensa-

tion, because they were made of dead materials. For what can be more preposterous than to hope for any help at the hands of them; seeing that neither the stuff whereof they are made, nor the shape which is given them by man's hand, contains so much as one drop of divine essence, to procure them reverence? Notwithstanding, by the way, the prophet gives an inkling that the preciousness of the stuff gives no excellence to the idols, that they should deserve to be set the more by. And therefore the sentence may be translated adversatively, That though they may be of silver and gold, yet are they not gods, because they are the work of man's hand; for if he had purposed simply to shew the worthlessness of their material, he would rather have called them wood and stone, but now he makes mention only of the gold and silver: nevertheless the prophet admonishes us, by the way, that nothing is less befitting than that a god should receive either his *being*, or his *shape*, yea, or his *honour*, at the hands of men, seeing that they themselves hold their frail breath but by tenure of courtesy. Whence it follows, that the heathen foolishly glory in the help of their god, whom they themselves set up. For whence have the idols their beginning, but of the will of men? Materials are at hand, and it were free for them to make of their gold or silver not only a dish, or some other plate, but also an urinal; but they choose to make a god. And what can be more ridiculous, than that a lifeless mass should be converted into godhead? And the prophet adds sarcastically, that though the heathen fashion members for their images, yet can they not give them either any motion or use of them. The more glorious therefore the faithful feel their privilege to be, because the true and only God doth undoubtedly stand on their side: whereas they are certain that all the heathen do but glory in vain of the defence of shadows. Still this doctrine must be extended further: for thereby we gather generally that God is missought under outward shapes, which have no likeness or affinity to his heavenly glory. For unless we hold to this principle at the present day, the heathen would have been furnished with a ready plea, that they were wrongfully condemned, because although they made themselves idols upon earth, yet they believed that God is in heaven. For they thought not that Jupiter himself was either of stone or of gold, or of earth, but that he was represented under those shapes. For whence came this phrase, *To make supplication at the gods*, but because they thought the images to be as it were the representations of the gods? The Sicilians, says Cicero, have no gods to pray to. He would, in so saying, have

spoken barbarously, if it had not been an opinion settled in the minds of men in general, that the shapes of the gods in heaven were represented to their eyes in brass, silver, or stone. But as they thought the gods to be nearer them when they came before their images, the prophet justly lashes this dotage of theirs, that they enclose the godhead within corruptible representations, because nothing is further from the nature of God than to dwell under stone, or a piece of marble, or wood and timber, or brass, or silver. And, in this respect, Habakkuk, ii. 8, terms that gross manner of worshipping God *the school of falsehood*. Further is to be marked that taunt of his, *They have mouth and speak not, &c.* For wherefore do we flee to God, but because our life depends upon him, our welfare is in his hand, and the abundance of all good things, and the power to help us, centre in him? What is more against reason, therefore, than to crave that from images, which they want themselves, since they are void both of motion and of sense?

8 *They that make them, &c.*] To many this seems an imprecation, and therefore they translate the future tense in the mood of wishing, *May they become like unto them, &c.* But it is no less applicable as a sneer, if the prophet should affirm that idolaters are no less blockish than the very stocks or stones themselves. And justly does he inveigh thus bitterly against men naturally endued with reason, because they banish all reason and judgment from them, and deprive themselves of common sense. For they that crave life of dead things, do they not, as much as in them is, quench all light of reason? The effect is, that if there were in them one particle of sound understanding, they would not attribute godhead to the works of their hands, to which they are not able to give sense. And surely even this one thing were enough to take away the pretence of ignorance, in forging false gods to themselves contrary to natural reason. Whence it follows, that they shut their eyes, overcast themselves with darkness, and besot themselves: which wilful blindness makes them utterly inexcusable, so that they cannot pretend that their error proceeds from a godly zeal. Neither do I doubt but the prophet meant to dissipate the pretence and colour of ignorance, because men wilfully brutalize themselves. *Whosoever trusteth, &c.* Hereby it appears more evidently why God abhorreth images so greatly; namely, because he cannot abide that his honour should be taken from him and transferred to them. Nothing belongs more peculiarly to God, than that the world should acknowledge him to be the only



author of salvation, and crave and look for whatsoever is needful from him alone. And therefore he is robbed of his due honour, and his majesty is as it were brought to nothing, as often as trust is reposed in anything else. This traitorousness the prophet arraigns; even as God's indignation is also in many places compared to jealousy, whenever he seeth idols and counterfeit gods decked with his spoils. If a man should make an image of marble, wood, or brass; or if he should cast one of gold or silver, this were not of itself so heinous a matter; but when they go about to tie God to their inventions, and as it were to draw him out of heaven, then is there a mere lie set up in his room. True it is, that God's glory is, if I may so term it, falsified as soon as it is clad with corruptible shape; (*For to whom hast thou likened me?* he crieth, by the prophet Isaiah, xl. 25, and xlv. 5; and the scripture is full of such texts;) but yet the reproach is doubled when his wisdom, grace, and power, are believed to be shut up in idols: although for men to forge idols, and then to tie their trust to them, are diseases almost inseparable. For whence cometh it that the world so greedily covets gods of stone, or of wood, or of clay, or of any earthly materials, but because they imagine God to be far from them, till they may hold him tied to them by some hand? Therefore, as they are unwilling to seek God spiritually, they pluck him down from his throne, and place him under lifeless elements. Hence it comes to pass that they direct their prayers to images, because they think that in them God's ears, yea, and his eyes and hands, are near to them. I have told you already, that these two vices can scarcely be separated, but that whosoever by making idols turn God's truth into a lie, must also needs challenge divine power to their idols: nevertheless, as I told you just now, the prophet's intent was to condemn the chief treachery, and which of all others is most detestable, when he says that the unbelievers *do put their trust in idols*.

9 O Israel, trust thou in the Lord; he is their help and their shield.

10 Ye house of Aaron, trust ye in the Lord; he is their help and their shield.

11 Ye that fear the Lord, trust ye in the Lord; he is their help and their shield.

12 The Lord hath been mindful of us; he will bless: he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron.



13 He will bless them that fear the Lord, both the small and the great.

14 The Lord will cast *woe* upon you, even upon you, and upon your children.

15 Blessed are you of the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

9 *O Israel, trust, &c.*] Again the prophet returns to this point of doctrine, that the true worshippers of God need not fear that he will forsake them or disappoint them in their need; because he is as much inclined to watch over their welfare, as furnished with power to do it. Notwithstanding, in the first place the prophet exhorts all Israel in general to trust in God; and secondly, he speaks to the house of Aaron by name; and thirdly, sets down them that fear God: in which order there is very good reason, for God hath adopted the whole people without exception, and his grace was offered to them all, so that they ought generally to have fixed their hope in him; in which sense Paul, Acts xxvi. 7, says that the twelve tribes of Israel wait for the promised deliverance. Not without cause therefore does the prophet comprise the whole of Israel at first. And yet again, as God had chosen the Levites peculiarly to himself, and specially the priests of the house of Aaron to go before the rest, and to be as it were the chief priests of religion, he requireth more of them than of the rest of the commonalty. Not that salvation was promised specially to them, but because it was meet that they should shew the way to others, as they only might enter into the sanctuary; as if the prophet should say, Ye sons of Aaron, whom God hath willed to be instructors of religion to his people, be ye an example of faith to the rest, seeing he hath vouchsafed you this singular honour, opening to you his sanctuary.

11 *Ye that fear the Lord, &c.*] He speaks not of foreigners, as some falsely suppose, as though it should be a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles. For as he joins them to the children of Israel and the children of Aaron, they think that the uncircumcised are denoted, who were not then gathered into the sheepfold. By the same argument one might gather that the priests are not of the stock of Abraham, because mention is made of them alone by themselves. Nay rather, there is in these words a covert correction, whereby he separates the true worshippers of God from the hypocrites, which were degenerate sons of Abraham. Forasmuch, then, as many of the children of Abraham after the flesh were fallen from the faith of their father, the prophet

restrains the promise to those that embraced the same by faith, and worshipped God uncorruptly. And thus now we perceive why he proceeded by these three steps; as if a man should at this day direct his talk first to the whole body of the church, and afterwards come down to the ministers and teachers, who must be the standard-bearers to the rest. And as many falsely boast of the empty title of the church, and therefore deserve not to be accounted among God's natural children, he names distinctly the pure and not the counterfeit worshippers of God.

12 *The Lord hath been mindful, &c.*] Many translate the word *bless* in the time past, as though he should stir up the faithful to hope well, by setting before them the experience of times past in thiswise; We have now learned by long experience what the favour of our God may avail us, because we have not had any prosperity, and abundance of all good things, nor stability of condition from any other source. For he takes that for a principle, which each of us ought to regard as certain; namely, that the world never goes well and happily for us further than as God blesseth us. Now, therefore, as often as the Israelites were delivered out of their manifold dangers, or helped at their need, or friendlily entreated, so many evident proofs had they of God's gracious favour towards them. Notwithstanding, as no reason compels us to alter the future tense of the verb, it will suit very well that the faithful have the same favour promised them which they had had experience of before. And so the meaning would be, that God, being mindful of his covenant, hath regarded us hitherto; therefore, as his blessing has begun, so will it flow down upon us even to the end. Also he repeats the same order, giving the higher degree in God's blessing to the children of Aaron, and excluding the visored Israelites from it. He says, *both the small and the great*; by which circumstance he commends God's fatherly loving-kindness the more, inasmuch as he neglecteth not even the vilest and most despised, provided only they call for his help with all their heart. Seeing, then, that there is no acceptance of persons before God, let not our low and miserable state fright us from approaching God, since he so gently allureth them that seem to be of no esteem. Also the repeating of the word *bless*, denotes the continual course of his favour. If any prefer to hold still the preter tense, the sense will be, that God's gracious goodness towards his people flowed in long-continued succession, which ought to be an assured proof of his everlasting love. And this sense is furthered by the next verse, where he says that God will *multiply* the benefits that he had bestowed heretofore. For as God's

bounteousness is an inexhaustible fountain, it will never cease to keep its course as long as men prevent it not by the barrier of their own unthankfulness. Whence it flows also to their posterity, because God spreadeth forth the grace and fruit of his adoption to a thousand generations.

15 *Blessed are you, &c.*] In the last verse the prophet had put them in hope of continual felicity, because God's endless power never becomes dry, neither ceaseth he at any time to enrich those whom he hath once made partakers of his bounteousness. Now to confirm this doctrine, he declares that the children of Abraham were chosen out from all other nations, that upon assurance of this privilege, they should not hesitate to yield themselves wholly to so good and beneficent a father. Again, as the flesh, by reason of its slowness, apprehends not God's mighty power, the knowledge whereof holds us in quiet and rest under his protection, the prophet by calling him *the maker of heaven and earth*, puts us in remembrance that there is no cause to fear lest he alone should not be sufficient to defend us. For God hath not so made heaven and earth, as that he sitteth now idle in heaven, but so as that he ruleth by his sovereign word whatsoever he hath once made.

16 The heavens, *even* the heavens, are the Lord's : but he hath given the earth to the children of men.

17 Not the dead shall praise thee, O God, neither all they that go down into silence.

18 But we will praise God from this time forth for evermore. Praise ye the Lord.

16 *The heavens, &c.*] Here the prophet commends God's goodness and fatherly love towards mankind, that whereas he himself wanteth nothing, yet he hath made the world with all the richness and abundance thereof for men's use. For how happens it that the earth is fraught with so great variety of good things, which everywhere offer themselves to our sight, but because God, as a forecasting householder, hath provided beforehand for our necessities? Then as many comforts as we enjoy here, so many are the assurances of his fatherly concern. This is the prophet's meaning, which I marvel to see so carelessly passed over by most interpreters. The effect is, that God being content with his own glory, hath enriched the earth with all abundance, so that men should not want anything; and he proves that God can be without all worldly wealth, because he dwelleth in heaven. For surely neither wine nor corn, nor any other sustenance

of life is produced there. Whence it follows, that God needeth not to seek anything out of himself. And hereto pertains this repetition, *The heavens, the heavens suffice the Lord*; and as he hath no need of any helps, he is as good as a hundred worlds to himself. There remains therefore this second point, that whatsoever wealth is in the world, proclaims with a loud voice how beneficent a father God is towards men. But seeing that the Holy Ghost had preached of this incomparable goodness of God, it is a wonder that there should be no smack of this doctrine. Under the papacy they chanted this Psalm (and so do they still at this day) in their churches. But does one in a hundred of them weigh, that God, by giving all things to us, reserveth nothing to himself but thanksgiving? Nay, not in that point only did the thanklessness of the world betray itself; but the wicked varlets in more shameless manner durst openly burst out into gross and most shameful blasphemy, using this verse as a facetious sarcasm when they would say that God took his ease and pleasure in heaven, and had no care of worldly affairs. And whereas the prophet declares here expressly, that the world serves God to no other purpose but to shew forth his fatherly concern for men, these swine and dogs have wrested the prophet's words to a mockery, as though he had no regard of men by reason of his vast distance from them. I am compelled here to recite a notable story. It happened that as we were at supper in a certain inn, a heathenish despiser of God laughing to scorn our discourse on the hope of the heavenly life, often poured forth this scoff, *The heaven of heavens to the Lord*. Suddenly at that word he was taken with sore torments, and began to yell out, *O God, O God*, and, as he had a wide throat of his own, he filled all the room with his bellowing. Then I, who had become exasperated against him, proceeded after my manner, telling him angrily, that at least he perceived that God was not mocked with impunity. One of the guests, who is yet alive at this day, an honest man and religious, but yet witty, used this opinion to another end. Callest thou upon God? Hast thou forgotten thy philosophy? Why dost thou not suffer him to take his ease in his own heaven? And as often as the other thundered out, *O God*, this man, mocking him, replied, Where is now thy *Cælum cæli domino*? And truly for that time his pain went away, but yet he spent the rest of his life in his former unclean filthiness.

17 *Not the dead, &c.*] Here the prophet proceeds further, and beseeches God to shew himself favourable to his church, were it for this cause only, that mankind may not perish

utterly, and that there may be people not only to enjoy his bounteous liberality, but also to call upon his name and to praise it. For after the prophet has commended God's peculiar graciousness towards the Israelites, and consequently the bountifulness that he useth towards all mankind, he resorts to God's mercifulness, that he would pardon the sins of his people. And he takes this for his ground, that whereas the heathen nations ingulf themselves in God's benefits, only Abraham's offspring is chosen to set forth his praises. As if he should say, Lord, if thou shouldst suffer us to perish, what would ensue of it, but that thy renown should die, and be buried together with us? But here arises a doubt, because he seems to bereave all the dead of perception. But if the souls remain alive, after they are departed out of the prison of the body, it is certain that then they live more actively. Whence it follows, that God is praised by the dead also. Besides this, in assigning men their dwelling-place upon earth, he so separates them from God, that he leaves them no other life than such as the brute beasts have as well as they. For the earth is not given to men alone, but also to oxen, swine, dogs, lions, and bears, yea, and to every kind of insect also. For there is not a fly, no, nor a louse, but the earth affords them a dwelling-place. The solution of the first question is easy; for men were therefore placed upon earth, that they might as it were with one mouth sound forth the praises of God. To this harmony had the prophet respect, and the scripture avouches it in many other places; *I shall not die, but live, and tell forth all the works of the Lord*; Psalm cxviii. 17. Also the godly king Hezekiah said, *While I live, while I live, will I praise the Lord*; Isaiah xxxviii. 19. Jonah also, being cast out of the whale's belly, said, *I will make sacrifice, I will pay my vows unto the Lord*; Jonah ii. 10. Finally, forasmuch as the end to which we live, is to be setters forth of God's glory upon earth, and that there is no such communion and fellowship among the dead, as to sing God's praises among themselves one to another, the prophet does rightly in taking from the dead the office of praising God. Hereupon depends the solution of the other question. The prophet says that the earth is given to men; namely, there to occupy themselves in serving God, till they enjoy everlasting felicity. For whereas the cattle and wild beasts are also partakers of the abundance of the earth, yet the Holy Ghost avoucheth that all things are created chiefly for man's use, that thereby he may acknowledge God to be his father. In the end the prophet concludes, that if God should not maintain his church, the whole order of nature would be turned topsyturvy. For in vain

were the world created, unless there were some people to call upon God. Thence he gathers, that there shall always survive some remnant. And he not only promises that the church shall continue safe, but also exhorts such as shall be saved by this means, to thanksgiving; nay rather, he binds himself in the name of them all to the setting forth of God's praises. Neither speaks he of the men of one age only, but of the whole body of the church, which is continued by God successively from age to age, that he may always have witnesses, and publishers of his justice, goodness, and mercy.

### PSALM CXVI.

*David, being delivered out of extreme perils, recites what sore torment and heaviness of mind he had suffered, and also how wonderfully God had preserved him; for from the very desperateness of his state God's goodness appeared the brighter in restoring him to safety, because all hope had been cut off if God had not helped him. By this means he provokes himself to giving of thanks, and confesses that he can find no other kind of return to make him for his innumerable benefits.*

1 I have loved, because the Lord shall hear the voice of my prayer.

2 For he hath inclined his ear unto me, and in my days I will call upon him.

3 The snares of death have compassed me, and the sorrows of the grave have found me out: I have found trouble and grief.

4 I will call upon the name of the Lord: Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

1 *I have loved, &c.*] Here, from the commencement, David protests that the charms of God's goodness allured him to repose upon him alone. For the defective manner of speech is more forcible, for thereby he expresses that he has nowhere either joy or rest save only in God. For we know that till such time as God bindeth our souls thoroughly to him, they are always gadding after vain enticements and burning with unquietness. David avouches that this disease is cured in him, because verily he has felt that God is favourable to him. And because he has found by experience that they are substantially blessed that call upon God, he protests that no attractions shall draw him away



from him. This *loving*, therefore, imports as much as if he should deny that anything would be sweet or delectable to him without God. Whereby we gather that they profit but slenderly in the experience of God's grace, who, having been heard, yield not themselves wholly to his protection. To the same purpose also makes the second verse, saving that the second part admits an appropriate sense, which the interpreters pass over in silence. For whereas it is said, *In my days will I call upon him*, they expound it with one consent thus: I that have had such good success heretofore by praying unto God, will proceed in the same course all my life long. But it should be seen whether it may not suit as well, that *the days of David* should be taken for the convenient time of seeking help, namely, when he was pinched with distress. Neither am I deterred by the future tense in the verb נִקְרָא. For in the first verse also the words *shall hear* are undoubtedly meant of the time past, and then would the copula be turned into an adverb of time, which is very common among the Hebrews. But the passage hangs well together thus: Because he hath given ear to me when I called upon him in time of my adversity, yea, and even at the very moment of uttermost necessity. Notwithstanding, if any prefer the former exposition, I will not strive with him. The things that follow seem, however, to allow more this second exposition. For David begins in the way of expounding to shew what kind of days those were. And that he may the more advance God's glory according to its desert, he declares that there was no way for him to escape from death; as if a man being tied among his enemies with manacles and fetters were bereft of all hope of deliverance. Then confesses he that he was sold unto death, and that he was overtaken and caught, so that there was no way to escape. And like as he says, *he was tied with the cords of death*; so also adds he, *that he fell into troubles and griefs*. And here he confirms that which he said erewhile: namely, that when he might have seemed to be cast far away from God, then was the fittest time for him to pray.

5 The Lord is merciful and just, and our God is pitiful.

6 The Lord preserveth the simple: I was in misery, and he saved me.

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath rewarded upon thee.



8 Because thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eye from tears, and my foot from falling.

9 I shall walk before the face of the Lord in the lands of the living.

5 *The Lord is merciful, &c.*] Now he sets forth the fruits of that *loving* which he spoke of, placing before himself God's titles of commendation that might be of force to maintain faith in him. First he calls him *merciful*, because he is forward to help men freely. Hence springeth his *justice*, which he executeth in defending those that are his. Further is added *pity*, without which we are unworthy that God should succour us. And as the afflictions that befall us often seem to shut the gate against his justice, it follows therefrom that nothing is sweeter than to rest in him alone, so that all our thoughts may be fixed upon his fatherly love, and no delight or pleasure may draw us away to anything else. Afterwards he applies the use of God's mercy and justice to *the preserving of the simple*, that is, of such as being destitute of counsel are not able to shift for themselves. This word פְּתִילִים is taken oftentimes in a bad sense for unadvised and foolish folk, that will not be ruled by good counsel. But now they are termed *simple* that lie open to receive wrong, who are not sagacious in guarding against snares; and finally, who are easy to be entrapped; whereas the children of this world both excel in wiliness, and also are armed with methods to defend themselves. David, therefore, acknowledges himself to be as a child that could not take care of itself, and that he was in nowise able to repel the dangers that he was subject to. And therefore the Greek interpreter erred not in translating it τὰ νηπία, *babes*. The effect is, that when the wretched have neither policy nor reason to devise means of escape, God is wise for them, and setteth the secret shield of his providence between them and all the peril wherewith their welfare is assaulted. Lastly, David propounds an example in himself, that being brought to utter destitution, he recovered his pristine state through the favour of God.

7 *Return unto thy rest, &c.*] Now he exhorts himself to take heart, or rather, speaking to his own soul, he bids it be quiet, because God had shewn himself favourable. Some interpreters, by the word *rest*, understand *God*, but it is forced. For, rather, it is taken for a calm and well-settled state of mind. For David confesses himself to have been sore stricken, and harassed amid many inquietudes, even as every one of us is conscious of his own unquietness, when

the terrors of death hang over us on all sides. Although, then, David excelled in rare fortitude, yet was he disquieted through the enforcement of grief; and an inward agitation so troubled his mind, that he justly complains that he was bereft of his peace. But he says that God's grace sufficed to appease all these perturbations. Nevertheless, here arises a question, whether the experience alone of God's grace remedies the fear and disquietude of our minds; for David says he will be at peace hereafter, because he had been relieved by God's help. Now if the faithful recover not their quietness further than as God sheweth himself their deliverer, what room will there be for faith, and of what force will the promises be? For surely the proof of faith is this, when calmly and in silence we wait for the tokens of God's favour which he hideth from us. And wheresoever faith thrives, it quiets men's consciences and minds, so that *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding*, bears sovereign rule there, according as Paul says, Philip. iv. 7. And therefore the godly rest unmoved, though all the world go to wreck. What means, then, this *returning unto rest*? I answer, that although God's children are tossed up and down, yet they have their support still in God's word, so that they cannot fall away altogether. Still, though they cast themselves upon God's providence in trust of his promises, yet they are distressed with unquietness, and are sorely buffeted amidst the storms of temptation. But, as soon as God succoureth them, not only their minds have peace inwardly, but they also gather matter of mirth and gladness from his manifested favour. Of this latter species of quietness, David treats now, seeing it is time for him to delight himself tranquilly in God, although trouble had overmastered him for a time. They translate נָמַל improperly *to reward*, whereas, generally, it signifies as well *to bestow a benefit*, as *to render a reward*; and that he confirms in the next verse, when he says that *his soul was delivered from death, &c.* The retribution, therefore, so to speak, is this; that God had wiped the tears from his eyes by delivering him from death. But the order of the words is transposed. For according to our custom, he should rather have said thus: He hath delivered my feet from falling, and mine eyes from tears; nay rather, he hath delivered my soul from death: for the weightiest matter we are wont to set in the last place. But among the Hebrews it is no absurdity to place the words as they are here, which are to be expounded thus: God hath not only saved me from present death, but also dealt still more bounteously with me, driving away heaviness from me, and reaching me

his hand, that I should not stumble. For it is an amplification of God's grace, that he restored one to life that was wellnigh dead.

9 *I shall walk before, &c.*] Here I take *walking before God* to imply as much as to live under his protection. Hence David hopes to enjoy his safety continually. For nothing is more to be wished, than to have our life shut in by his guardianship, so that he may keep watch and ward for us. Therefore, as the wicked think themselves most secure when they are furthest from God; so the godly think themselves blessed in this only, that God directeth their whole life. David then says he shall live, because he has God to preserve his life. For when he adds, *in the land of the living*, it imports thus much, that we are forlorn, and that new destructions press upon us almost every moment, if he forget us.

10 I have believed, because I will speak: I am sore troubled.

11 I have said in my fear, All men are liars.

10 *I have believed, &c.*] Again he relates in what great peril he was, that the miracle of his deliverance may shine forth the better. But first he protests that he speaks from the unfeigned feeling of his heart, and that he utters not any other thing with his mouth, which he had not long be-thought him of, and well digested before. For so imports the portion, *I believed, because I will speak*; namely, that his words proceed from earnest affection of heart. Paul, citing this place, 2 Cor. iv. 13, follows the Greek translation, *I believed, and therefore have I spoken*. But as I have told you heretofore, that it was not the intent of the apostles to recite every word and syllable, it may suffice that the words of David are properly applied in their native sense to the case that Paul treats of there. For after he has covertly taunted the Corinthians for advancing themselves above the clouds, as though they had been exempted from the common lot of men; *I believed*, says he, *and therefore have I spoken it*, that he who hath once raised Christ from death, will also extend Christ's life to us; that is to say, *I believe, and therefore I speak it*. Thence he gathers that the Corinthians are puffed up with foolish pride, because they do not humbly embrace Christ's cross, since it became them to speak by the same spirit of faith. Now although some Hebrew interpreters take the particle 'ו adversatively, yet the more correct sense, which also is allowed by the best learned, is this: I will not speak otherwise than I have conceived in my

heart. For the circumstance of the place requires that the outward protestation of the tongue should agree with the very meaning of the heart; because many lavishly babble that which never came into their thoughts; as if he should say, Let no man think I throw out hyperbolical expressions which have no foundation, for what I speak, the same have I believed. Whence is gathered a profitable doctrine, that faith cannot lie dead in men's hearts, but must of necessity break out. For the Holy Ghost coupleth here the faith of the heart and the outward confession in one holy bond, and *what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*. Treacherously, therefore, do dissemblers corrupt the whole word of God, who could find in their hearts to bury their faith in darkness. But we must bear in mind that God requireth at his children's hands the order that David prescribes; namely, that they should believe, ere they profess with their tongue. But, as I said, he treats of the greatness of his peril that he may the more illustrate the help that was sent him from God.

[1 *I said in my fear, &c.*] Some take the word *יָרָא*, for *haste* or *fleeing*, and interpret it that David spoke thus when he fled hastily from the presence of Saul. But as it signifies metaphorically *a trembling*, I doubt not but David declares that he was abashed in his heart, so that he was ready to fall headlong down. Therefore, as the trouble of his mind harassed him, he confesses that his heart almost sunk within him. In the second part of the verse also, the interpreters disagree. Some think that David confesses himself to have doubted of the promise that was made him by the prophet Samuel. He, indeed, was a sufficient witness, but when David saw himself driven out of his country, and from time to time in danger of death in every shape, there might some such temptation creep upon him, as that his anointing by Samuel was vain and to no purpose. Therefore, according to them, the meaning of the words is this: It wanted but little, that I had utterly quailed in my flight, and the promise made me had vanished away; nay rather, I thought myself beguiled with delusive hope. Others pick out an opposite sense, namely, that David overcame his temptation, insomuch that whereas Satan craftily seduced his mind to despair, he presently rebuked himself, and cut off the occasion of his own unbelief, in thiswise: What doest thou, wretch? Whither throwest thou thyself? Darest thou indirectly charge God with lying? Nay, rather let him be true, and take vanity, lying, and falsehood to thyself. But I suppose this doctrine to extend more generally; that is, that David proposed not this prophecy to himself directly,

but his mind being bewildered, he entangled himself in the snares of Satan unawares, so that he could not tell where to stay himself. For although the faithful often faint, so that the word of God vanishes in a manner quite away from them, according as Satan puts thick darkness before their eyes, yet forsake they not their foundation, nor deliberately charge God with untruth, but rather cast a bridle upon their wicked thoughts. Certainly, as the word *say* denotes among the Hebrews a settled persuasion, as we say in French, *J' ai conclu ou resolu*; this temptation could not so strike David's mind, but that he encountered it immediately. It remains, therefore, that what I have stated must be the sense; that David, having his mind overclouded, had not an eye to God at that instant. For though the faithful do not of set purpose quarrel, or inquire whether God be true or not, neither have their wits possessed with this cursed blasphemy, as it were fully developed, but rather drive it back and abominate it as often as it insinuates itself into their minds, yet it happens now and then that they are so troubled, that they see nothing but untruth and vanity. Such was David's state of mind, and so confused in his fear, as if thick clouds should take away the power of beholding the light. There is no certainty, saith he, there is no steadfastness. What shall I think? What shall I trust to? Whither shall I flee? And even thus do the faithful oftentimes debate, so that there is no certainty in men. For there is a veil drawn before their eyes, which keeps them from beholding the light of God, and therefore they grovel upon the earth, till being lifted up above the heavens, they begin again to see the truth of God. David's purpose, as I observed just now, is to enhance God's grace in every way. For this cause, in making mention of his own temptations, he confesses himself unworthy that God should relieve him with his help. For he ought to have collected his thoughts, that, leaning on the prophecy, he might raise himself above all distrust. He denies that he had done so, because his mind, being troubled, saw nothing but vanity. Now since that he received so terrible a shock, what will befall us if God support us not, and hold us up? Which, however, does not tend to this, that the faithful should hang in doubt and uncertainty, but rather that they should call earnestly upon God. And let us give diligent heed to the encounter, for these combats are incredible till one comes to the trial. Still we must at the same time bear in mind that this embarrassment lasted but a little while in David; namely, when he wandered in doubt, because the remembrance of the prophecy had slipped out of his mind.

12 What shall I repay unto the Lord? All his benefits *are* upon me.

13 I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

14 I will pay my vows unto the Lord, *even* now in the presence of all his people.

12 *What shall I repay, &c.*] Now he cries out with wonderment that he is more overwhelmed with the immeasurable heap of God's benefits than that he can be thankful enough for them. For it is an emphatic interrogation, whereby he shews that he wants not zeal, but was utterly destitute of the means. Forasmuch, therefore, as he finds himself unable to make payment, he adopts the only course left him, that is, to magnify God's grace with whatsoever praises he can. I would fain, says he, discharge my duty, but when I look about me on all sides, I find nothing in the world that may make recompense. As for the words, some expound the part *upon me*, as though David should say the remembrance of all the benefits that God had bestowed upon him, was deeply fixed in his mind. Others supply the word *for*, according also as the Greek interpreter has translated it. But it suits better that there should be a full point at the word *Lord*. For after he has acknowledged himself unable to recompense God, or rather, to meet with nothing that may make recompense; to confirm the matter, he adds that he is bound, not by some one kind of benefit, but innumerable; as if he should say, Seeing there is no kind of benefit whereby God hath not bound me unto him, how should I be able to requite them? Forasmuch then as all recompenses fail, he flees to thanksgiving, which one payment abundantly satisfies God. And this example of David's warns us that God's benefits are not to be considered lightly or superficially, for if they are estimated according to their desert, the very thought of them must ravish us to wonder. For there is none of us who is not loaded with an infinite accumulation of God's benefits. But our vanity, which draws away our minds to wandering speculations, occasions forgetfulness of this doctrine, though it ought to engage us in continual meditation upon it. And so much the more praise does God's liberality towards us deserve, in that he looketh for no return at our hands, neither can receive any, because he wanteth nothing, and we are poor and destitute of all good things.

13 *I will receive the cup, &c.*] He alludes to the established custom under the law. For when they gave



solemn thanks to God, there was also a feast made, whereat was a holy libation in token of gladness. And because this was as a symbol of their deliverance out of Egypt, he terms it *the cup of salvation*. And the word *call upon*, signifies to magnify God's name, which same thing he expresses more clearly immediately after, where he says *he will pay his vows* in the presence of the faithful; for it was not lawful to offer sacrifice elsewhere than in the sanctuary. The effect is, that the faithful need not trouble themselves greatly how to discharge their duties, because God requireth no satisfactions whereof he knoweth them to be destitute, but is content with naked and simple thankfulness. For the due payment is to confess that we are indebted to him for all things. Now if God bear with us so kindly and courteously, the more detestable is our slothfulness if we render not to him at least the praises that he requireth. And assuredly they are more than unworthy to enjoy the sunlight, and the breath of life, not to say the riches of the whole world, that defraud their Maker of so small a right. And though the ceremonies of the law are not now in use, and therefore this external libation ceases whereof David makes mention, yet the spiritual service is still in force, of which we have seen in Psalm l. 23; *The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me*. Meanwhile, let us bear in mind that we then praise God aright, when we offer him in sacrifice, not only our tongues, but also ourselves, and whatsoever is in us. Not that God reapeth any advantage thereby, but because it is reasonable that our thankfulness should shew itself in this way.

14 *I will pay my vows, &c.*] Since he made vows in the midst of his perils, therein shines forth the constancy of his godliness. Now he shews that he was not in anywise forgetful of God as most men are, who, when pressed by God's hand, invoke his protection for a little while, but soon bury the remembrance of the help they have received. But the Holy Ghost, treating of true worship, not without cause joineth these two points together in inseparable union; namely, *Call upon me in the day of trouble*; and, *for thy deliverance glorify thou me*; Psalm l. 15. If any man think it unreasonable that the faithful should bargain with God by making vows, that they might win themselves favour, I answer, They promise not the sacrifice of praise to cloy him with flattery, as if he were a mortal man, or to bind him to them by promising him a reward, for David protested just now that he brings no recompense whatever. The end, then, and use of vows is, first, that the children of God might seal up the hope of obtaining in their hearts; and secondly, stir up



themselves the more to thanksgiving. For surely the liberty of vowing is granted to God's children to relieve their infirmity, because by this means their most kind-hearted father cometh down to them and giveth them leave to deal familiarly with him, provided they vow to the end I have mentioned. Be what may, nothing must be attempted but by his leave. Wherefore the more ridiculous are the papists, who defend whatsoever foolish and unreasonable vows they choose to blab out indiscreetly under pretence of what is said here, as though drunkenness were lawful because God giveth us leave to eat and drink.

15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his meek ones.

16 Go to, Lord, for I am thy servant; I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid: thou hast broken my bonds asunder.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of praise, and call upon the name of the Lord.

18 I will pay my vows unto the Lord, *even* now in the presence of all his people.

19 In the courts of the Lord's house, *even* in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

15 *Precious in the sight, &c.*] He passes to a general doctrine, that God hath a care of the godly to help them in their necessity, because their life is precious in his sight. And with this buckler he purposed to fence himself against the terrors of death, which pressed often upon him when he looked to be swallowed up every moment. For when we are in peril while God thus winketh, a notion steals upon us that we are neglected as vile bondslaves, and our life accounted as a thing of nought. Further, we know that when the wicked see us destitute of all defence and succour, they exalt themselves the more boldly against us, as though there were no account of our life or death. Against their forwardness, therefore, has David used this sentence, That God setteth more store by his worshippers than to expose them to the hazard of death. Although, then, for a time we may be abandoned to all the injuries of fortune and the world, yet let us always bethink us of this comfort, that God will shew openly at length how dearly he loveth our souls. Like as at this day when guiltless blood is shed, and the ungodly vaunt themselves with cruelty, as though they were triumphing over a vanquished God, let us always stand

fast to this doctrine, that the death of the faithful, which is of no worth in the sight of men, or rather shameful, is so precious in God's sight, that at length he stretcheth his hand out to them even when they are dead, and by dreadful examples sheweth how sorely he hateth the cruelty of those that wrongfully persecute the good and simple. For if he keep their tears numbered in a bottle, (Psalm lvi. 8,) how should he suffer their blood to vanish away? Therefore in time convenient the prophecy of Isaiah, which says that the earth shall yield up her bloodsheds, shall be fulfilled; Isaiah, xxvi. 21. Nevertheless, that we may make room for the grace of God, let us put upon us the spirit of meekness, according as the prophet, by terming the faithful *meek ones*, willeth them to submit their necks quietly to bear the burden of the cross, that they may possess their souls in patience; Luke, xxi. 19.

16 *Go to, Lord, &c.*] As in the last verse he gloried that in his person God had shewn a proof of the fatherly goodwill he beareth to all the faithful, so now he applies the general doctrine peculiarly to himself by saying *that his bonds are taken away*, because he was one of the number of God's servants. And he names them *bonds*, as if a man should be dragged by a hangman, tied hand and foot. Moreover, when he determines the cause of his deliverance to be that he was the servant of God, he does in nowise brag of his own services, but rather carries his mind back to God's free election. For it lies not in us to make ourselves God's servants, but this dignity befalls us by his adoption alone. And therefore David avouches not simply that he was God's servant, but also *the son of his handmaid*; as if he should say he had attained that honour even from his mother's womb, or rather from before he was born. Therefore he sets himself forth as a common mirror to all men that shall devote themselves to God's service, that they may not doubt but they shall be safe under his protection.

17 *I will offer to thee, &c.*] Again he repeats that which he had said of thanksgiving, and that publicly: for we must testify our godliness, not only by secret affection before God, but also by outward profession among men. And although David went through the ceremonies of the law with the rest of the people, because he knew that those exercises were not commanded in vain at that time, yet had he an eye to the end of them, so that he offered chiefly the sacrifice of praise and the calves of his lips. He names *the courts of God's house*, because in those days there were no altars but one, from which it was not lawful to depart; and it was God's will to have the holy assemblies kept there, that the

faithful might take example one of another to be forward in the exercise of godliness.

### PSALM CXVII.

1 All nations praise ye the Lord: all people magnify ye him.

2 For his mercy is settled upon us: and the truth of the Lord *endureth* for ever. Praise ye the Lord.

1 *All nations, &c.*] As the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the prophet exhorteth all nations to set out God's mercy and truth, Paul, Rom. xv. 11, rightly gathers that by this prophecy was foretold the calling of the whole world. For although the unbelievers are not utterly void of God's mercy, yet as they perceive it not, and therewithal are ignorant of his truth, how should they gird themselves to the praising of him? In vain, therefore, would the prophet talk to the heathen nations, if they were not to be gathered into the unity of faith together with the children of Abraham. Neither is there cause why officious critics should try to elude this argument of St. Paul's with their cavils. I grant, indeed, that in other places the Holy Ghost exhorteth as well mountains as rivers, with trees, rain, winds, and thunder, to sound forth the praises of God, and that because all creatures, even though holding their peace, proclaim him to be their Maker. But he is praised after another manner by men, who are endued with understanding. According also as the rendering of the cause which is added declares, that is, because God's mercy and truth minister matter thereof. Moreover, the prophet means not that God should be praised everywhere by the Gentiles, because this knowledge dwells in the corner of Judah, but because it shall be spread abroad through the whole world. First, therefore, he bids them praise God, because his goodness is increased or confirmed (for *לל* signifies both); and, secondly, because his truth endureth steadfast for ever. How, therefore, should they that pass over God's goodness with brutish dulness, and refuse his heavenly doctrine with deaf ears, be ready to sing God's praises? Moreover, God's *truth* imports properly in this place the assurance of his grace. For he may be true, and yet menace destruction to the whole world. But he has therefore placed mercy foremost, that this faithfulness, containing the assurance of his fatherly goodwill, might cheer up the minds of the godly. Truly his power

and his justice deserve no less praise than the other: but as men will never be rightly minded to praise God, unless they are allured by some taste of his goodness, the prophet with excellent reason has chosen mercy and faithfulness, which alone open the mouths of the dumb. Furthermore, his truth is not said to be everlasting, as though his mercy should flourish a little while, and afterwards quickly vanish away; (for by the same reason it would be but small in respect of mercy, which is said to be plenteous;) but the meaning is, that God's mercy is rich towards us, that it flows in an uninterrupted stream, because it is joined with his everlasting truth. But if we read that his mercy is confirmed, the scruple will be taken quite away, for then as well his truth as his mercy will be adorned alike with the same commendation of constancy and steadiness.

### PSALM CXVIII.

*At the time this Psalm was composed, whenever it was, David, having gotten the sovereign power, as he knew that his being king was for the welfare of the whole church, exhorts all the children of Abraham to consider this grace. Also he makes mention of his perils, the greatness and variety whereof might have made an end of him a hundred times, had not God helped him wonderfully. Whence it is easy to conjecture, that he came not to the royal throne either by his own policy, or by the favour of men, or by any worldly means. At the same time also he declares that he rushed not forth rashly, nor by unlawful means, to take Saul's kingdom from him by force, but that he was created king by God's appointment. Meanwhile, we must remember that it was the purpose of the Holy Ghost to describe to us the everlasting and spiritual kingdom of God's Son, under the image of that temporal kingdom, even as David represented the person of him.*

1 Praise ye the Lord, because he is good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 Let them that fear the Lord now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

1 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] We see that David does not

give thanks to God in his own person exclusively, but with a loud voice exhorts the people to a common duty of godliness. And this he does not only because he was ordained to be a guide and instructor to others; but also because God in making him king had shewn compassion on his persecuted church. Therefore he exhorts the Israelites to praise the grace of God, under whose happy auspices he comes forth to place them in safety. He says generally, at first, that God is good, and that his mercy is everlasting: but afterwards he alleges the proof of that goodness in himself, as we shall see in the proper place. Meanwhile, it behoves you to call to remembrance, as I told you in the last Psalm, that occasion of praising God is set forth to us in his mercy rather than in his power and justice, because though his glory shine forth in them also, yet shall we never sing his praises cheerfully and heartily until he allure us with the sweetness of his goodness; according also as in Psalm li. 17, we have seen the mouths of the faithful opened to praise God, by feeling him to be their deliverer. And whereas he speaks only to Israel and the children of Aaron, he does it in respect of his time, because the adoption remained as yet in that one nation, though he follows again the same order which he kept in Psalm cxvi. For after he has exhorted the children of Abraham, who were separated from the Gentiles by the election of God, and also the children of Aaron, who by right of their priesthood ought to take the lead in singing, he turns his discourse to the other worshippers of God, because there were many disguised Israelites, who though they occupied places in the church, were nevertheless strangers to it. Neither is it any hindrance that David by the spirit of prophecy treats here of Christ's future kingdom. For though it be now extended to the Gentiles, yet had it its original and first-fruits among the chosen people.

5 Out of trouble have I called upon God: and he hath heard me at large.

6 The Lord is with me, I will not fear what man can do unto me.

7 God is with me among my helpers: and I shall see *my desire* upon mine adversaries.

8 It is better to trust in the Lord, than to trust in men.

9 It is better to trust in the Lord, than to trust in princes.

5 *Out of trouble, &c.*] This is a special application of the doctrine that we saw, to the person of David: to which, however, is annexed the rejoicing of the whole church, whose common welfare God had provided for by maintaining that one man. And by his own example he confirms all the godly not to despond in adversity. He seems also purposely to encounter a doubt, which is wont straightway to steal upon men whenever God's goodness is preached; namely, Why then doth he suffer his servants to be so sore oppressed and afflicted? David therefore admonishes them, that for all that God's mercy fails not, because there is comfort and remedy prepared for our miseries by praying. The circumstance of time, which he sets down, when he says he prayed out of his distress, or trouble, and by that means was set at large, admonishes us that when adversities oppress us most, then is it fittest time for praying.

6 *The Lord is with me, &c.*] Relying upon God's help alone, he vaunts himself not only against a few enemies, but also against the whole world: as if he should say, forasmuch as he is shrouded under God's hand, he confidently and safely despises whatsoever men can practise against him. And truly, then is due honour yielded to God, when in respect of him the whole power of the world is esteemed as nothing. By this means also he censures the unbelief almost of all men, who wilfully dishearten themselves with groundless fears. For though all men covet tranquillity of mind, yet because they wickedly defraud God of the praise of his power, their own unthankfulness bereaves them of that so great a good: for if they would submit all things to God's will and power, as it becomes them to do, they would stand fearless and prepared to overcome all inconveniences, for fear whereof they from time to time lose all heart. But now, esteeming the mischievous efforts of men more potent than the protection of God, they deserve to be abashed at the noise of every leaf that falls. This unhallowed feeling David meant to correct by his own example, when he says that as he is sure of God's favour, he fears not all the men in the world, and that because he believes that it lies in his power to baffle all practices that are attempted against him. Now if he sung this song after his deliverance, it appears how well he had profited in the experience of God's grace. Therefore, as often as God shall have helped us, our trust must thereby increase for the time to come; and we must never be so forgetful, but that we always bear in mind the goodness and power of God, which we had trial of in the very hour of our necessity. And it may be that he rehearses here the things that he bethought him of in the midst of his



dangers. Nevertheless, the former exposition is the likelier; namely, that after he had gotten the victory, he should glory in God's continual help for the time to come. Some take *helpers* for the small band of men that David had won over to him; but in my opinion it is too insipid: for it would be absurd to muster God among the six hundred that he led with him, as though he were one of the troop. Therefore I interpret it more simply, that he calls God his helper, as if he should say, it is enough for him so he have God on his side. For although he were destitute of man's help, yet scruples he not to match God against all enemies.

8 *It is better to trust, &c.*] He appears to say nothing but what is common and rife. For all men with one consent confess, that when comparison comes to be made between God and men, he alone ought to be of more account than all of them, and therefore that nothing is better than to recline upon the hope of the help which he hath promised to those that are his. Truly this confession is in all men's mouths: and yet, in the meantime, scarce one in a hundred is fully resolved in himself that God alone is enough for him. Greatly, therefore, has he profited, who, holding himself content with God alone, ceases not to hope well, yea though he find no help upon earth. But it is an improper comparison, because it is unlawful to transfer to men any portion of our trust, which must be fixed wholly on God. The sense, however, is not doubtful; namely, that men's vain hopes are laughed to scorn, with which they are drawn hither and thither; and that as long as the world smiles upon them, they set up their crests, either passing over or despising God. Some think that David disdainfully reproaches his enemies with their being deceived in hanging upon Saul's favour. But I think that this is too restricted: and I doubt not but that David proposes himself as an example to all the godly; because he had received an ample reward of his hope, when leaning upon God alone he had patiently taken the bereavement of all worldly helps. In the second part of the verse, where he puts *princes* instead of *men*, there is an amplification; as if he should say, not only they are foolishly deceived who put their trust in common persons, but also they that are friends to greatest kings, because always in the end the trust shall be accursed that is grounded upon flesh, but where God's favour is, there even death shall be turned into life.

10 All nations have compassed me about: *but* in the name of the Lord I shall surely destroy them.



11 They have compassed me, and compassed me again: *but* in the name of the Lord I shall surely destroy them.

12 They have come about me like bees; they are quenched as a fire of thorns: *but* in the name of the Lord I shall surely destroy them.

13 In thrusting thou hast thrust at me that I might fall, and the Lord hath helped me.

14 God is my strength, and *my* song, and he hath saved me.

10 *All nations, &c.*] He records in these verses how wonderfully he had been delivered, that all men may know for certain that the deliverance which could not happen by man's power was doubtless from God. For he repeats often that he was besieged, and that not by a few, but by a huge multitude. Seeing then that the whole realm, burning against him with anger and furiousness, so hemmed him in on all sides, that there was no way for him to escape, there could no help come to him from anywhere else than from heaven. However, when he complains that all nations were set against him, some refer it to the bordering nations, by whom we know that David was endangered on all sides. Notwithstanding, in my judgment he means simply that all the world was against him. For he sets the help of God alone against the deadly and outrageous hatred that was exerted against him, as well by his countrymen as by his neighbours, so that there was no nook upon earth for him to rest in safety in. For although there were no army gathered together from many nations to besiege him, yet as there was no quiet abiding for him but among the coverts of wild beasts, (nay rather, he was driven from thence also by fear, and as many as he met with, so many were the snares that he saw laid for him,) it is no marvel though he say he was compassed about by all nations. And the elliptical manner of speaking has more force with it, than if he had said he trusted in God, and by means thereof had gotten the upperhand. For in alleging the name only of God, he avouches himself to have been devoid of all other succours; so that he must have certainly perished if God alone had not helped him. I chose to translate the particle 'ו affirmatively, but in this sense; Although I am besieged round about by the world, yet let but God's power only succour me, and truly it shall be more than strong enough to destroy all my enemies. When he harps so often upon his being

encompassed about, therein is expressed a stubborn and insatiable hatred: and by the similitude of bees he denotes a mad impetuosity; for although there is not so great strength in those creatures, yet is there a strange fierceness of anger, and they inspire no little fear when they attack in the blindness of their fury. Notwithstanding, a little after he adds *that they were quenched as a fire of thorns*, which, though it make a great crackling at the first, and cast up a greater flame than a fire of substantial wood, yet dies away soon. The effect is, that David's enemies assailed him tumultuously, but their violence soon subsided. Therefore he repeats again, the third time, that whatsoever misfortune betide, it will soon give way, provided God's power be present.

13 *In thrusting, &c.*] Either there is an alteration of the number, or else he addresses Saul, who was the chief of his enemies. Further, in the person of one man he mocks all of them together. And in saying that *he was thrust at*, he confesses that he stood not by his own strength, as they that are able to make good resistance with sure footing sustain the assaults of their adversaries, but hereby God's strength 'shines forth the better, in that he was lifted up even when he was in the very act of falling. And therefore in the next verse he concludes that *God is his strength and his praise*. For in the first title, by acknowledging plainly his own weakness, he ascribes his safety to God alone. And when he has confessed himself to have been strong in God only, namely, so far forth as he was upheld by his power, immediately he adds that God is *his praise*, or *his song*; which word is taken passively, as if he should say that no matter for boasting was supplied from himself, but the whole praise of his safety rested in God alone. Whereto also pertains the close of the verse, where he declares that God saved him.

15 The voice of joy and welfare is in the tents of the righteous: the Lord's hand hath wrought strength.

16 The Lord's right hand is exalted: the Lord's right hand hath wrought strength.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of God.

18 God hath chastised me sore, but he hath not delivered me unto death.

19 Open ye unto me the gates of righteousness; I will go in at them, and praise God.

20 This is the Lord's gate; the righteous shall enter in at it.

21 I will praise thee because thou hast heard me, and been my deliverance.

15 *The voice of joy, &c.*] He avouches God's benefit to have been such, as that it was not enough to give thanks for it in a dark corner. Not only because God's working had appeared therein both notable and worthy to be had in remembrance, but also because the fruit thereof should redound to the whole church. Therefore, as his deliverance was wonderful, and profitable in general to all the godly, David promises public thanksgiving, and at the same time exhorts all the godly to bear him company in that holy service. But chiefly his purpose is by this circumstance to extol the greatness of God's grace; and also to shew by the very effect of it, that not he alone was preserved, but the whole church in his person. The mutual communion that is among the faithful requires indeed that they should in turn give thanks to God one for another. But the case of David, whom God had delivered wonderfully from many deaths and made sovereign of his chosen people, was peculiar. It is to be noted that he matches the voice of mirth and gladness with God's praise; according as it becomes not the faithful in anywise to rejoice without a feeling of God's grace. Moreover, *to work strength* imports as much as to display his power mightily, so as that the brightness thereof may shine conspicuously. For oftentimes God delivereth his faithful ones secretly and under an appearance of weakness, so that they feel themselves to be delivered by his hand; but this is not so well known to others. But David affirms that God's working was openly avouched, so that it could not be doubted at all from whence that deliverance came. To the same purpose pertains the other saying, *that God's right hand was exalted*, because God had lifted up his hand by working mightily, and beyond his accustomed manner.

17 *I shall not die, &c.*] David speaks like one rising from the grave. For he that says *I shall not die*, acknowledges himself to be delivered from death, to which he was devoted. And certainly he had lived many years together in utter despair, so that sundry deaths pressed upon him every moment, and his escape from one was the entering into another. Then says he, *he shall not die*, because he has recovered life, which he lost all hope of. Now we, whose life is hidden in God with Christ, Coloss. iii. 3, must think upon

this song all the days of our life. If any respite be given us now and then, we must say with David, that we who are shut up in death are come forth to new life again; but must struggle continually through the midst of darkness, because our salvation, which is laid up in hope, cannot be seen of us openly. In the second part of the verse he shews the lawful use of life. For God prolongeth not the life of his servants that they should pamper themselves with meat and drink, and sleep deep, and enjoy all earthly pleasures, but that they should magnify him for his benefits wherewith he loadeth them day by day; of which matter I have treated in Ps. cxv.

18 *The Lord hath chastised, &c.*] Here David acknowledges that although his enemies assaulted him wrongfully, yet he was but chastised with God's rod by their hands; and also that the same was a fatherly chastisement, inasmuch as God smote him not with deadly stripes, but moderated his rigour. And he seems to prevent the wrongful judgments wherewith he saw himself maliciously oppressed, as though all the miseries that he had suffered had been so many signs of reprobation. The calumnies, therefore, which the reprobates cast upon him he gives a contrary direction to, saying he was corrected gently and after a fatherly sort. The first point in adversity is to know that we are brought low by God's hand; and then must be added this other point, that by this means our obedience is tried, we ourselves are awakened from our over-drowsiness, our old man is crucified, our impurities cleansed, we ourselves brought to the obedience of God, and stimulated to the minding of the heavenly life. For if we call these things to remembrance, there is none of us but will be afraid to murmur against God; nay rather, every one of us will with meek heart submit himself to him. And surely our biting upon the bit, and our bursting forth into impatience arise from hence, that the greater part of us consider not that afflictions are God's chastisements, and others of us taste not of his fatherly government. Wherefore this second member is to be marked advisedly, that God dealeth always mercifully with those that are his, so that he healeth by smiting them. Not that his fatherly loving-kindness is seen at all times, but because the issue at length shews that his stripes were so far from deadly, that they were as beneficial as a medicine which weakens us for a little while, and afterwards heals our sins, and makes us as fresh and lusty as ever we were.

19 *Open ye unto me, &c.*] Here, from the ardour of zeal, David bursts forth to testify his thankfulness, bidding the

temple to be opened to him, as if the victims were brought into view. And again he confirms that which he has said heretofore, that he will give thanks to God openly in a lawful congregation of godly people. Now though the priests customarily opened the temple doors for the people, yet David seems to allude to his long exile. And this conjecture is the better confirmed by the next verse. As, therefore, he had been kept a long time from coming within the sanctuary, yea rather, utterly bereft of the sight of it, now he rejoices and triumphs that he is admitted again, that he may offer sacrifice to God. And at the same time he shews that he will come, not as the hypocrites were wont, whom God by the prophet, Is. i. 11, upbraideth that they wear his pavement in vain, but that he will come with the sacrifice of praise. And as he was conscious of true devotion, he says it is good reason that the temple doors, which he durst not approach awhile ago, should be opened for him and such as he. *It is*, says he, *the Lord's door*, and therefore he will at length open it for the righteous. The effect comes to this, that although David were a banished man, both from the temple and from his country, yet now he, as well as all the true worshippers of God, recover their right after that the state of the kingdom was restored. And so he indirectly bewails the profanation of the temple so long as it was possessed by the heathen despisers of God under the tyranny of Saul, as if it had been a kennel for dogs and other unclean beasts. Therefore as the temple had long time been a den of thieves, this indignity is censured; but now, when it stands open for the righteous, he avouches it to be the house of God. And what happened in Saul's time is seen at this day; namely, that God's accursed enemies possess his sanctuary contrary to all right and honesty. For the pope were not antichrist if he sat not in the temple of God; but since by his horrid pollutions he has everywhere turned all temples into brothels, let us endeavour to cleanse them, as much as we can, that God may be worshipped in them purely. And as God vouchsafeth to choose his holy dwelling-place among us, let us do the best we can to keep away the defilements and rank adulterations that mar the pureness of the church. Afterwards David records briefly for what cause he purposes to offer the sacrifice of praise to God, namely, because he had been preserved by his grace.

22 The stone which the builders misliked is become the head corner-stone.

23 This was the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes.

24 This is the day which the Lord made; let us rejoice and be glad therein.

25 Lord, I beseech thee, save me; I beseech *thee*, I beseech *thee*, give prosperous success, I beseech *thee*.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we bless you out of the house of the Lord.

22 *The stone which the, &c.*] Now David, having taken heart, pours contempt on the slanders wherewith he was wrongfully and undeservedly borne down. And as it was a sore prejudice to him to be condemned by the whole bench of the nobles, and by all others that were in authority, inso-much that all men were of opinion that he was wicked and reprobate; this error he purposely disproves, and avouches his own innocence against all the chief of them. I heed not, says he, though I be rejected of all the greatest men, since it has appeared, by the deed itself, that I was chosen by the judgment of God. And he uses an appropriate metaphor in comparing himself to a stone, and the chief men of the church to builders. Truly it might seem against all reason, that the nobles of the realm, who held the government of the church in their hands, should be bereft of God's spirit and sound understanding. But against their wicked and deceitful verdicts he matches God's grace, that he was set up by the decree and hand of God to bear up the whole building. In short, he declares that the glorious titles and high privileges wherein the wicked were so proud, are no obstacle to him, because, resting upon God's call, he obtains a glory that surpasses the judgments of the whole world. But as it was a hard matter to make men believe it, he extols God's grace with many words, that the authority thereof may bridle all wicked and obstreperous gainsayings. He says, *It is the Lord's doing*; as if he should say, Go your ways, and quarrel with God all ye that strive to cast me down from the throne which I have not mounted rashly of mine own head, or by worldly means, but by the manifest power of God. And he proves it by this, that all of them were compelled to wonder at what was done, as at a thing incredible. Now when God worketh wonderfully and above our understanding, his power must needs appear manifest to us. If any man would take it ad-



versatively, in this sense, Although men may be amazed at this work of God, yet it must not be rejected; let him use his own discretion. To me, certainly, it seems likely that David set down the term *wonderful*, that the insolence of the flesh might give place to God, and no man dare to clamour against him any more. Finally, how these things may properly agree to Christ, I may more conveniently declare when I shall have come to the twenty-fifth verse.

24 *This is the day, &c.*] Now he proclaims that it was a lucky and fortunate day when he was at length admitted to be king, and the anointing of him by Samuel established by the effect. And although it be true that God hath created all days alike, yet David, by way of excellence, calls that day God's day which after long darkness had dawned to the welfare of the church, because it was beautified with a notable mark worthy of being renowned among them that should come after. And because the church had emerged from such deep darkness, he exhorts the faithful to mirth and gladness: and this does he of set purpose, because many either knew not God's grace, or else despised it; and others were so obstinately attached to Saul, that they had great difficulty in submitting to the authority of David.

25 *I beseech thee, O Lord, &c.*] Because *Now* is often an adverb of time, many translate it in this place *Save me now, I beseech thee*. As, however, it is often also an adverb of asking, I have chosen this interpretation, which will not square ill with the present place; for I doubt not but the Holy Ghost by this frequent repetition meant to stir up a singular vehemency and earnestness of praying in the hearts of the faithful by the mouth of the prophet. Nevertheless, if any prefer another sense, I easily bear with it. This, indeed, is certain, that here is a form of praying given to the chosen people, that they might wish lucky success to David's reign, as upon it depended the common welfare of them all. And by these words he avouched himself to reign by God's appointment, and consequently that they are unworthy to occupy any place in the church, whosoever cannot find in their hearts to wish the prosperity of his reign. In the next verse is added a special wish which the faithful must conceive; namely, that as God hath ordained David to be the minister of his grace, so he would *bless him also*. For they are said to come in the name of the Lord, whose service he uses to the welfare of his people; like as prophets and teachers, whom he raiseth up to gather his church together; and as captains and officers, whom he furnisheth with his spirit. But David's case was a special one, inasmuch as he exhibited a figure of Christ; because it was



God's will that his people should live under him and his successors until the coming of Christ. It may also be an expression of congratulation, when it is said, *Blessed is he that cometh, &c.* But as soon after there is added the blessing of the priests, I rather incline to this point, that the people wish God's grace and favour to David. And that the faithful may make this prayer the more cheerfully, and thereby be encouraged to embrace the king whom God hath set over them, immediately after there is added this promise in the person of the priests, *we bless you out of the house of the Lord.* For so do they speak according to the character of their office; for to them the office of blessing was enjoined, according as Moses teaches in many places, and especially in Numbers, vi. 23. But it is not for nought that they join the welfare of the church and the prosperity of the reign together. But rather they put them in mind that the people shall be in safety as long as that reign flourishes, and that all of them shall be blessed with their king, because there is an inseparable bond between the head and the members. Now seeing we know, that when David was created king, then was the foundation laid of the everlasting kingdom which was at length set forth in the coming of Christ; and that that temporal throne wherein David and his posterity sat, was an image of the everlasting kingdom wherewith Christ was endowed by his father, so that he obtained all power both in heaven and earth; it is not to be doubted but that the prophet enjoins the faithful to pray continually for the joyful and prosperous course of this spiritual kingdom. For it behoved those that lived under the old figures, to pray for David and his successors. And when the whole dignity of that kingdom fell into decay, it behoved them with greater earnestness to wish for the restoration of it, which God had promised. Finally, whatsoever is said here, properly pertains to Christ's person; and what was darkly shadowed in David, was substantially exhibited in Christ. David's election was secret; and when Samuel had anointed him to be king, he was rejected of Saul and of all the captains of the people, and all men abhorred him as a man worthy of a hundred deaths. Being therefore disfigured with such great reproach, he seemed not a fit stone to be used in a building. The like beginnings had the kingdom of Christ, who, being sent by his father to redeem the church, not only was despised of the world, but also treated with hatred and cursing; and that not only among the lower sort, but also among the chief priests of the church. But here it may be demanded, how the prophet may call them builders who were so far off from helping to maintain the church, that

they laboured only to overthrow the whole building of it. For we know with what fury the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time bent themselves to overthrow all godliness. The solution is easy ; namely, that David had an eye to their office and not to their intent. For although Saul and his counsellors were indeed underminers of God's church, yet were they builders in respect of their calling. So is the Holy Ghost wont to grant to the wicked the honourable title of their office, until such time as he removeth them from it. We know how impious the priests oftentimes were among the people of old time, and yet the honour and estimation of their title remained still to them, until they were cast down from their estate. So speaks Isaiah, xlii. 19; *Who is blind, but my servant? and who is foolish, but he whom I have sent?* For although their purpose was to throw down the whole ordinance, yet as God had called them to another end, he terms them still God's servants and messengers. So also at this day, howsoever the pope and his rank clergy usurp the title of priesthood, yet cease they not to be the sworn enemies of Christ. Whence it follows that they are anything rather than God's lawful ministers, and so much the more grievous damnation shall they have, that whereas they hold the places of shepherds, yet they make havock of Christ's flock. Now though there be a great difference between them and the Levitical priests, yet as the ordinary authority rests in their hands, it is no harm at all to grant them the title, so that they shroud not the shamefulness of their tyranny under that pretence. For if the bare title sufficed to make them reverend, Christ must needs have been put to silence, seeing that the priests everywhere refused his doctrine. Nay rather, this place teaches that now and then those are the worst workmen, to whom the charge of ruling the church is committed. David in the Spirit, terms them chief *builders* that went about to destroy God's son and the salvation of all mankind, and by whom the service of God was defiled, religion wholly corrupted, and the temple of God profaned. Therefore, if every one that is endued with the ordinary authority, must without exception be hearkened unto as a lawful shepherd, then let Christ hold his peace. For it happens most commonly, that his fiercest foes lurk under the visor of shepherds. We see with how strong and sure a buckler the Holy Ghost armeth us against the vain boastings of the popish clergy. Admit that they are builders in name, but if they reject Christ, must we also needs deny him? Nay, rather let us despise their decrees and tread them under foot, and let us honour this precious stone, upon whom our welfare is founded. For when it is said *to become the*

*head corner-stone*, understand by these words, that he is the very foundation of the church, which bears up the weight of the whole building, because the chief strength of buildings ought to be in the corners: for I like not this curious device of Augustin's, that Christ is the corner-stone because he hath knit the Jews and the Gentiles together, like as a corner is the common part between two different walls. Afterwards David, as I have said, inculcates with many words, that it is wrong to estimate Christ's kingdom by the verdict and voices of men, because it is reared miraculously by the power of God, in opposition to the will and efforts of the world. Meanwhile we must remember, that what was fulfilled in the person of Christ, belongs to the continual course of his kingdom, even unto the end of the world. The chief priests of the church despised Christ when he lived upon earth; and now those that name themselves the successors of Peter and Paul, (whereas they are altogether Annases and Caiaphases,) do, after the manner of the giants, make war against the Gospel and the Holy Ghost. But there is no reason why this furious rebellion should trouble us, but let us humbly adore his wonderful power, which shall overthrow the perverse judgments of the world. For if the small capacity of our understanding were able to conceive the order that God observeth in maintaining his church, there would be no mention made of miracle. Whence we gather that the manner of his working is incomprehensible, and such as reduces all human understanding to nothing. It is, however, demanded here, whether it was of necessity that Christ should be rejected of the builders. But the church were in ill plight if it should never have any shepherds but such as were deadly enemies of her welfare. Again, Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 10, naming himself a builder, teaches that it was the common office of all the apostles. I answer, therefore, that not all who bear authority in the church, are condemned of blindness continually, but the Holy Ghost encountereth a stumbling-block which otherwise is wont to stop many men's ways, when they see Christ's name overwhelmed with the splendour of the world. Inasmuch then as God, to shew forth his power the more manifestly, giveth Satan the rein, so that they that are endued with authority and power, refuse Christ, in this behalf the Holy Ghost biddeth us be of a stout courage, and bidding adieu to such perverse opinions, to receive him reverently whom God hath set over us to be our king. We know that at the beginning the builders went about to overthrow Christ. The same thing comes to pass in our days: for they to whom the government of Christ's church was committed, have endeavoured by all means to overthrow Christ's

kingdom, and, at this day, bring to bear upon it whatsoever engines they can devise. But if we bear this prophecy in mind, our faith shall be so far from fainting, that it shall be established more and more. For thereby it appears the better, that Christ reigneth not by the advice and counsel of men, nor is fenced with earthly fortifications, even also as he hath not obtained his kingdom by men's voices. Meanwhile, if the builders build well, so much the less excusable is the malice of them, that will not suffer themselves to be applied to the holy building. But whenever we shall be tried with this kind of temptation, let us always call to mind that it is in no wise meet that the church should be governed after our fancy, and that the governing thereof is unknown to us, because we are not able to comprehend that which is done by miracle. What follows afterwards, that this day was made of God, warns us that there reigneth nothing but deadly darkness, until Christ the sun of righteousness shine upon us by his Gospel. At the same time also we are warned, that this work is ascribed to God, lest men should claim any merit on the score of their own endeavours. The exhortation to rejoicing which follows soon after, tends to this, that we should not yield to the madness of our enemies, how much soever they rage against us in order to dispossess us of the joy that Christ hath brought us. For seeing that all our felicity flows from thence, it is no marvel though all ungodly persons chafe and fume that we should be raised to such triumphant joy, as may trample upon all sorrows and sooth the bitterness of the afflictions we have to bear. The prayer that follows was before Christ's coming rife among the people, yea even to the very children, according also as the evangelists bear witness that Christ was welcomed with the same manner of speech. And no doubt it was God's will at that time to make good the prophecy which he had uttered by the mouth of David. Nay, that acclamation openly declares that the interpretation, against which the Jews now clamour and bark, was then received by common consent. Wherefore, so much the less is their wilfulness and wickedness to be excused. For I arraign not their stupidity, seeing they overcast themselves and others with mists of ignorance designedly. And since, during that sorrowful state of desolation and hideous havock the Jews ceased not for all that to use this prayer, their perseverance ought to give us fresh courage at this day. They had not then the honour of kingdom, no throne, no name but with God, and yet, being in this forlorn and desperate plight, they held still the form of prayer endited once to them by the Holy Ghost. Although the church be piteously torn at this day, yet let

us learn, by this example, to go on manfully praying for the restitution of it. Furthermore, we are taught again by these words, that Christ's kingdom is not either promoted or upheld by the policy of men, but is the work of God alone. For the faithful are taught to resort to the blessing alone of him. Also the very repeating of the words, which I have told you carries a force with it, must awaken our drowsiness, that we may be the more earnestly intent on this prayer. Indeed God could both set up and maintain his Son's kingdom of his own accord and without the prayer of any one, but it is not for nought that he hath enjoined this duty on us. For there is nothing wherein the faithful may exercise themselves better, than in earnestly seeking his glory.

27 The Lord is God, and he hath shined upon us: bind ye the lamb with cords unto the horns of the altar.

28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee; my God, I will exalt thee.

29 Praise ye the Lord because he is good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

27 *God is the Lord, &c.*] He confirms that which he said before; namely, that God, having pity of his church, dispelled her darkness, and gave her the light of his grace at what time David mounted the royal throne, because it was a prelude of the redemption which was to be hoped for at length through Christ. Also he repeats that God is the author of this so unlooked-for deliverance, and he says that by the very effect he openly proved himself to be very God. For there is a latent force in these words, *the Lord himself is a strong God, for he hath restored us the light of life*. For as by reason of the disordered state of the church, the faithful were almost out of heart, and the ungodly imagined that the children of Abraham were past recovery, God himself was after a sort hidden from them. Therefore he descends again to giving of thanks. And as the faithful were not wont to give solemn thanks to God without sacrifices, he bids *them bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar*. For we know that David, being a diligent observer of the law, did in nowise neglect the ceremonies that God had commanded. Still, he had always an eye to the legitimate end of them, that those rudiments might be a help to him in offering spiritual service to God. But now, when the shadows of the law are abolished, we must offer our thanksgivings to God by Christ, who sanctifieth them with his purity, lest we might be shut out

from this service of godliness, by the filthiness of our own flesh. And that David directed his mind to the praises of God appears more evidently by the next verse; where he promises to magnify God's name, because he had found him to be his God; that is to say, because he had perceived in very deed, that at his hand he was always sure of ready help.

### PSALM CXIX.

*As various matters are treated of in this Psalm, it is difficult to exhibit its contents in a brief summary. We may observe, however, that there are two points principally aimed at; for the prophet both exhorts God's children to follow after godliness and holy life, and also prescribes the rule and mode of true worship; namely, that the faithful give themselves wholly to the learning of the law. But as he frequently intermingles promises, thereby the more to encourage the worshippers of God to live godlily and righteously, he also inserts complaints regarding the wicked despising of the law, lest they should defile themselves through bad examples. In a word, various transitions from one point of doctrine to another will occur; nor does he pursue any one definite subject without breaking off: it will therefore be the best way to discuss the several topics in their respective places.*

1 Blessed are those that are found in the way, walking in the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and seek after him with all their heart.

3 Truly they that walk in his ways work no iniquity.

4 Thou hast commanded thy statutes to be thoroughly kept.

5 O that my ways might be guided to the keeping of thy statutes!

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will praise thee in uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.

8 I will keep thy statutes: forsake me not over long.

Some name this Psalm the octonary, because that through every eight verses the first words of every verse begin all



with one letter, according to the order of the Hebrew alphabet. And that this was done to help the memory is to be gathered from the thing itself: for it contains a doctrine which God's children ought to think upon continually. Therefore the prophet, to make it less irksome to the readers, has marked every set of eight verses with one several letter set at the head of every verse: by which help even the dull and cold were deprived of excuse for their inattention. And although this relief does not extend to those who read it in Latin, yet must we hold this for a principle, that here is propounded such a doctrine as all God's children ought to exercise themselves in, and to learn by heart, that it may be the more familiar and habitual to them. Concerning the author I affirm nothing, because one cannot by any probable conjecture guess who he was, neither does there appear any certainty in it, according to the unanimous opinion of interpreters. As David, however, excelled all others in this gift, I shall make no conscience to put in his name now and then. Also concerning the terms which we shall find often repeated, it is convenient that we should say somewhat beforehand. I will not speak of the word *תורה*, because though it is derived from *learning*, yet it is everywhere taken for *law*. Some Hebrew doctors say that *חוקים* signifies *statutes* and *ordinances of God*, the reason of which is apparent. They will have *פקודים* to signify *precepts*, that concern natural justice. Certain it is that *משפטים* signifies *commandments*, which is proved by the etymology of the word. The Hebrews take *עדות*, for *the doctrine of the law*, but with a certain limitation, so that we may know that therein is comprehended in whatwise God covenanteth with his people. Why the precepts of the law are called judgments, righteousnesses, or justice, is known well enough; namely, that we might understand that God commandeth nothing but what is rightful and just, and consequently that there is no other rule of perfect holiness for men to seek, but by framing their life to the following of the law. In nearly the same sense they are called the ways of the Lord, that whosoever deviates not from the guidance of the law, may certainly know himself to be safe from all error. But as all manner of ordinances of God or of kings are indifferently called by the name of *חוקים*, and also seeing it is manifest by many places that *פקודים* is extended to diverse kinds, the forementioned subtle distinction is disproved. And in this present Psalm itself it will appear from the context, that all the aforesaid words are for the most part synonymous. Therefore that the prophet may procure the law more reverence, he honours it with many titles, but yet always

commends one self-same doctrine. Now I come down to the words.

1 *Blessed are those that are sound, &c.*] Here is set forth the same paradox which we saw in the beginning of the book. For though all men naturally covet to be happy, yet are they so far from seeking happiness in the right path, that they had rather wander wilfully to their own destruction by innumerable by-ways: wherefore the Holy Ghost justly reproveth such blindness and apathy. And truly the meaning of the words is clear, were it not that every man's own lust carries him with brutish headiness the contrary way. For as the further every man departs from God the happier he imagines himself, what the Holy Ghost speaketh concerning virtue and the service of God, all men reject as fabulous. Undoubtedly scarce one in a hundred embraces this doctrine. The *way* is put here for the *course* or *manner of life*. And so he terms those *sound in their way*, who have an unfeigned and uniform desire to follow righteousness, and level their life at the mark. In the second member he defines more clearly what is the nature of pious and righteous living; namely, *to walk in the law of God*. For if a man run according to his own caprice, he shall do nothing but wander; and though all the world applaud him, yet shall he but weary himself without profit. But here it might be demanded whether the prophet excludes all such from the hope of happiness as serve not God perfectly, for thus none would be happy but the angels, because there is not any perfect observing of the law to be found anywhere upon earth. The solution is easy; that when soundness is required at the hands of God's children, free forgiveness, in which alone consists their welfare, is not taken away. Therefore God's servants are in suchwise blessed, as that nevertheless they have need to flee unto mercy, because their soundness is but by halves. Thus are they rightly said to be blessed that observe God's law faithfully; and yet therewith is fulfilled this saying, *Blessed are they to whom God imputeth not sins*, Ps. xxxii.

2. In the second verse he confirms the same doctrine better; calling those *blessed*, not that are wise unto themselves, or who invent a holiness to themselves, according to their own caprice, but who are devoted to God's covenant, and the doctrine of his law. And that we may know that God is in nowise content with eye-service, he requires also uncorrupted affection of heart. And truly, if God only is the competent judge and arbiter of our life, it is not enough to render service with our hands and our feet, except trueness of heart hold the first place.

3 *Truly they that, &c.*] Although in saying that they sin

not who follow God as their guide, he seem to say nothing but what is trite and common, and received everywhere by general consent, yet is this warning necessary for two causes; namely, that we may learn to submit our whole life to the governance of God, and also that we may be more attentive and careful to hear his doctrine. All men confess that such as obey God are out of peril of going astray; but in the mean time every man steps aside to his own by-paths. Does not this wantonness or boldness openly prove that they set more store by their own inventions, than by the certain law of God? Again, as often as any man has fallen, is not the apology of inadvertence immediately set up? as though no man had ever sinned wittingly and willingly: or as though God's law, which brings remedy for all misdoings, by bridling all sinful lusts, ministered not wisdom enough to make men wary. And therefore the prophet with reason declares, that as many as are learned in God's law are barred from pretence of ignorance, because if they are blind, it is through their own wilfulness: for if they gave good heed to God's voice, they would be well fenced against all the wiles of Satan. Furthermore, that he may strike fear into them, he says in the fourth verse, that God requireth *straitly* the keeping of his law: whence it follows that the contempt of it shall not escape unpunished. And by addressing God in the second person, he sets him before our eyes as a judge.

5 *O that my ways, &c.*] As the word *יָדָע* signifies also sometimes *to establish*, the prophet may seem to wish to himself the power to persevere: notwithstanding, I like better *guiding* or *directing*, because though God instruct us openly in his law, yet such is the dulness of our mind, and such is the stubbornness of our heart, that we have need to be guided every minute by his Spirit. Wherefore let the chief point of all our desires be, to crave a mind that may not be wise save according to God's law, and also a teachable and obedient heart. Afterwards he adds, that if a man be wholly given to the keeping of God's law, he needs not to fear that he shall repent him of any purpose or act. By *having respect*, he means that we may not give way to our own devices, nor take counsel of fleshly reason as to what is meet to do, but must determine once for all upon this point, that they hold the right way, who step not aside from God's commandments, neither to the right hand nor to the left. And although the greater number of men cease not to blame those that reverently regard his law, yet the prophet denies that they shall be *shamed*, because they are well assured of a good conscience before God and his angels, and therefore are thoroughly content with that

heavenly testimony: for if they depended upon the opinion of the world, they would quail continually. And he says, *unto all thy commandments*, because among so many snares of Satan, in such thick darkness, and in such dulness of ours, we had need of no small diligence to beware, if we mind to eschew offences in all respects. Wherefore we must endeavour that in everything which we do the remembrance of the law may be before our eyes, to stay us up from falling.

7 *I will praise thee, &c.*] He avouches it to be the singular benefit of God, if a man profit aright in his law. For this thanksgiving is put instead of a sign: as if he had said, Lord, thou shalt do me an incomparable good turn, if thou instruct me in thy law. Whence it follows, that nothing is more to be desired in this life; and would God we were well and thoroughly persuaded that it is so! For while we let slip no commodity of the flesh, in seeking carefully for all such things as we take to be for our profit, in the mean time we neglect what was of chief importance. *The judgments of righteousness*, import as much as the commandments that contain perfect righteousness in them; and so the prophet commends God's law, from the entire perfection of its doctrine. Moreover, we are taught by this verse, that no man praises God with pure affection of heart, save he that has profited so far in his school that he frames his life to obey him. For it is too cold a pretence to praise God with the mouth and tongue, if our life dishonour him. Rightly, therefore, does the prophet here set down the praising of God without hypocrisy, to be the fruit of true godliness.

8 *I will keep, &c.*] First he testifies that he is minded to keep the law of God, but in the mean time, as he is conscious of his own infirmity, he annexes praying, that he may not be destitute of God's grace. Nevertheless, this *forsaking*, may be taken two ways; either when God withdraweth his Spirit, or when he suffereth his servants to be troubled with adversity, as if he were estranged from them. And this latter exposition fits the place best, by reason of the words *over long*, which are added immediately after. For the prophet shuns not altogether to have his faith tried by temptations, but if the trial should be held out too long, he is afraid he should faint; and therefore he desires that his infirmity may be borne with. The effect is this; Thou, O God, seest of what mind I am; but as I am a man, hide not the signs of thy favour away from me too long, neither delay thy help, lest I think myself forsaken, and so swerve from the true following of godliness.

9 Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ?  
By taking heed according to thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee; suffer  
me not to stray from thy commandments.

11 I have hid thy sayings in my heart, that I might  
not sin against thee.

12 Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy  
statutes.

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments  
of thy mouth.

14 I have had as great delight in the way of thy  
testimonies, as in all riches.

15 I will be mindful of thy commandments, and  
consider all thy paths.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes, and I will  
not forget thy words.

9 *Wherewith shall &c.*] He repeats in other words what he had spoken before; namely, that how much soever men sooth themselves in their own doings, yet is there no cleanness in their life, until they have wholly addicted themselves to the word of God. But that he may move the more effectually, he expressly brings in striplings or young men for example. For by naming them he does not give a loose rein to men grown or stricken in age, as though they were able to rule themselves, and their own prudence were as good as a law to them; but as youth places men as it were at a point where two ways meet, to choose for themselves the course of life they will pursue, he intimates that when any one deliberates how he shall frame his life, no counsel can prove faithful, unless he sets before him the law of God as his instructress and guide. By this means the prophet provokes men to frame their manners betimes, and not to drive it off to a longer time, according as Solomon says, Eccles. xii. 1, *Remember thy maker in thy youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years whereof thou wilt be weary.* And truly we see, that such as drive it off from day to day, harden in their vices, so that it is too late for them to strive to amend them when they have entered on man's estate. There is added another reason; that young men, in whom the lusts of the flesh are more ebullient, have need as it were of a double rein; and the less restraint they have in themselves, the more necessary it is that such wantonness should be checked: not without cause, therefore,

does the prophet exhort them peculiarly to the study of the law. Now must we draw an argument from the greater to the less: for if the law of the Lord be of such force to bridle the headiness of youth, that it keeps pure and undefiled as many as regard it; no doubt it will be the best remedy to cure vices, when men come to ripeness of years, and their lusts are cooled. Therefore, that there is so great an accumulation of vices in the world, springs from hence, that all men indulge themselves in their own uncleanness, or yield more to their own inclination than to the heavenly doctrine: for the only true keeping is to look to ourselves according to God's word. But some, wise in their own conceit, cast themselves into the snares of Satan; others persist in a flagitious life from listlessness.

10 *With my whole heart, &c.*] Although it be true, that the prophet says he has an upright heart; yet, lest he might fall through infirmity, he calls upon God for help. However he does not boast here of any preparation of his own, as though he had begun to seek God of his own motion; but he magnifies the grace that he had obtained, and therewithal sues for steadfastness to persevere. Foolishly, therefore, do the papists catch hold of this and such other places, as though the saints had by their own freewill prevented the grace of the Holy Ghost, and afterwards been furthered by his help. For the prophet does not here part stakes between himself and God; but rather beseeches God to continue his work to the end, according as we are taught everywhere to allege God's benefits before him, until he have brought them to perfection. Meanwhile, it is lawful for us to pray the Lord to stretch out his hand to us, when he seeth our minds so framed, that we covet nothing so much as to do aright. And like as he raiseth us up by confidence, to crave the gift of perseverance at such time as he inspireth a right affection in our hearts; so also does he solicit us for the time to come, that we should not sit idle and indifferent, like soldiers who have fulfilled their service, but desire him to guide us with the spirit of wisdom, and hold us up with the spirit of strength every moment. For David here by his own example gives us a rule, that according as every man feels himself to have been helped by God's hand, so should he with the greater care and earnestness be moved to call for his continual help; because, except he hold us back with his hand, we instantly fall into error; which is expressed more plainly in the word *לשגג*, for it is a verb transitive, which imports as much as *to lead into error*; not that I would go about to prove God's inward motion by the signification of the word; but that the readers may



understand, that through our proneness to sin, as soon as God slacketh his hand, we instantly lapse into error. Also this place warns us, that whosoever steps never so little from God's commandments, wanders out of the way.

11 *I have hid, &c.*] As this Psalm was not made for any private use, as often as David sets forth his own example, we must bear in mind that under a type is prescribed to us what we ought to follow. In this place he teaches that we are then armed to avoid the devil's wiles, when God's law is thoroughly settled in our hearts. For except it possess our hearts entirely, we shall slip away from time to time inevitably. For as those that are but bookwise quickly betray their lack of skill if they have not their book before their eyes, even so, except we have drunk God's doctrine in, and are well steeped in the same, Satan will easily lay hold of us and ensnare us; therefore the true fortification after all is, not to have tasted God's law slightly, or to have skimmed over it in reading it, but to stow it deep in our minds. In the mean time, again we are warned that what opinion soever men have of their own wisdom, yet are they destitute of all right judgment, save so far as God is their schoolmaster.

12 *Blessed art thou, &c.*] Although the prophet had profited so far that he not only was one of God's disciples, but also a public teacher of the church, yet as he knows himself and all the most perfect to be but in their course till they come to the end of their life, he ceases not to crave still the spirit of understanding. And generally this place shews that although God's law may be always before our eyes, yet are not we so sharp-sighted that we can see the light which is set forth there, until God enlighten us with the spirit of judgment. And the cause why many are blind in the clear light of the doctrine is, that, in the confidence of their own sharp-sightedness, they regard not the secret illumination of the Spirit. Secondly, we may learn that no mortal man has such excellence of understanding but that he has always need of increase. For if the prophet, upon whom God had bestowed so honourable an office, protests himself to be still but a scholar, what a foolishness is it for us, who as yet are far from him, not to struggle to advance. Besides this, he trusts not in his own deservings to obtain his suit; but he beseeches God for his own glory's sake. For by using this exordium, *Blessed art thou, O Lord*, he shews that the source from whence he fetches his confidence to pray is because God is worthy of all praise for his goodness, justice, and mercy.

13 *With my lips, &c.*] He avouches in this verse, that

he not only had God's law treasured up in his own heart, but also that he had done his diligence to bring many fellow-disciples to the obedience of God. Truly of itself it were but a cold thing to be talking of God's law, as we see hypocrites do, who talk eloquently of the whole doctrine of godliness, from which notwithstanding they are as far off as possible. But what the prophet had professed just now of the affection of the heart, he now transfers to the tongue also. And immediately after, when he says he had taken as great delight in God's doctrine as in all the riches of the world, he confirms again that he had employed his pains in teaching others, from the bottom of his heart and without feigning. And he covertly compares his godly love of the law wherewith he was inflamed, with the unholy covetousness that possesses almost all the world; as if he had said, Whereas riches draw men's minds to them, it was no less delight to me to profit in the doctrine of godliness than to swim in all affluence.

15 *I will think upon, &c.*] You must bear in mind what I have told you heretofore, that the prophet does not here vainly sound his own praises, but sets forth a pattern for others to follow. We know how much the greater part of men are addicted to earthly cares, so that they can find no time nor leisure to think upon God's doctrine. Therefore to correct this coldness and sloth, he does well to commend diligence and heedfulness. And although the world hold us not so entangled, yet we know how easily forgetfulness of God's law steals upon us in our daily temptations. Not without cause, therefore, does the prophet exhort us to continual exercise, and bid us apply all our endeavours thereunto. And forasmuch as man's life is fleeting, so as they cease not to be drawn hither and thither by the lusts of the flesh, therefore he says he will be diligent in *considering God's paths*. Afterwards he repeats that *he was singularly delighted in this study*. For till a man sets his mind upon God's law cheerfully and delightedly, he shall profit but coldly and slowly in it. And this is the beginning of living well; even that God's law allure us with its sweetness. The same also is the only means of subduing or curing the lusts of the flesh. For, naturally, what pleases us that is not sinful? Therefore we shall evermore be carried headlong after them, except the delight of the law pull us back in the opposite direction.

17 Be good unto thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.

18 Open mine eyes, and I shall see wonders in thy law.

19 I am a stranger upon earth ; hide not thy commandments from me.

20 My soul is broken for desire to thy judgments always.

21 Thou hast destroyed the proud ; cursed be they that step aside from thy commandments.

22 Take from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.

23 Princes also have sat and spoken against me, *but* thy servant minded thy statutes.

24 Also thy testimonies *are* my delight, and my counsellors.

17 *Be good unto, &c.*] The word לַדָּבָר, which is translated *to requite*, does not signify a payment in return ; but often it imports as much as to bestow a benefit, as appears from Psalm cxvi. 7, and many other places. This passage indeed requires that it should be understood of a gratuitous benefit. And yet still the sense may be two-fold : either that it should be read alone in thiswise ; O God, shew thyself good to thy servant ; so shall I live, or then shall I think myself happy. Or else that the whole sentence should be read in one strain, thus : Grant thy servant thus much, O God, that I may live and keep thy commandments. If the former translation be preferred, the prophet testifies in these words that without God's favour he is as a dead man, and that although he had all things else at will, his life would be no life, except he might perceive that God favoured him. But more correct is this other exposition ; that the prophet requests it as the most precious benefit, that he may live to dedicate himself wholly to God, because he is fully resolved that there is no other cause why he should live, but to exercise himself in the service of God alone. And these two points, *that I may live*, and *that I may keep thy word*, hang together ; as if he should say he desired none other life than such as that in which he might prove himself to be a true and faithful servant of God. All men wish that God should prolong their life, and the whole world is vehemently moved to desire this ; but in the mean time scarce one in a hundred considers to what end he ought to live : the prophet, to call us back from this beastly affection, sets down the legitimate end to which we should live. Meanwhile he teaches, that if any man observe God's

law, it proceeds from the singular grace of the Holy Ghost. For if he had thought that it depended on his own freewill to prepare himself to the keeping of God's law, his prayer had been a mockery. And very near to this approaches the doctrine of the second verse. For after he has confessed that the power of keeping the law is given to men by God, presently he adds that each of us is blind, until the same God enlighten the eyes of our mind. God, indeed, shineth to us by his word; but the prophet means, that we are blind in the open light, until God taketh away the veil from our eyes. It is, therefore, exactly as if the prophet should bewail the blindness of himself and of all mankind, when he confesses that his eyes are veiled and closed, so that they cannot behold the light of the heavenly doctrine, until God open them with the secret grace of his Spirit. Howbeit, when God challengeth this office to himself, he teacheth that a remedy is at hand, provided we despise not the grace of enlightening which he offereth, upon trust of our own sharp sight. Furthermore, we may learn that we are not therefore enlightened that we should despise the outward word, and run away after secret inspirations; as many fantastical fools do, who think not themselves spiritual, unless, rejecting God's word, they set up their own wild dreams instead of it. But the prophet marks out a far other use of *enlightening*; that is, that our eyes may be able to discern the life-giving light which God sets forth by his word. And he terms the doctrine of the law, *wonders*: first, to humble us, that we may look up reverentially at the height thereof; and secondly, that he may the better persuade us that we have need of heavenly grace to understand the mysteries which pass our capacity. And hence we gather that under the name of the Law are meant not only the Ten Commandments, but also the covenant of everlasting salvation, which God hath made, with all things that appertain thereto. And surely, seeing we know that Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom*, Col. i. 3, is the *end of the law*, Rom. x. 4, it is no wonder that the prophet commends it in respect of the sublime mysteries thereof.

19 *I am a stranger, &c.*] It is worth while to note why he calls himself a sojourner and stranger in the world. For worldly and earthly men care for nothing but to live at ease here. But they who know that we have a race to run, and that our heritage is laid up for us in heaven, are not engrossed nor entangled with transitory things, but aspire to that to which they are called. The sense then is, Lord, seeing I must needs pass apace through the earth, what will

become of me, if I am destitute of the doctrine of thy law? Hereby we may learn, where it behoves us to begin, that we may keep our way cheerfully unto God. Moreover, God is said *to hide his commandments* from those whose eyes he openeth not, because when they are not endued with spiritual eyes, in seeing they see not, so that that is hidden which stands manifest before their eyes. And the prophet, to shew that he prays not so for form's sake, adds that he *burns all over with longing for the law*. For in the same manner as any one would be said to be consumed by his own intemperate zeal, if he should fix all his thoughts upon any object so eagerly as almost to lose the power of perception; so also the prophet declares that the energy of his mind is shattered and exhausted by his ardent longing for the law. And at the same time he intimates his perseverance, when he says *always*. For sometimes it happens that a man is moved with great earnestness to the study of the heavenly doctrine, but his fervour will soon pass away. We must therefore have steadfastness, that our hearts faint not for weariness.

21 *Thou hast destroyed.*] Others translate it, *thou hast rebuked*, &c.: and so signifies the word גער; but that is when the letter ך is joined with it in construction. But now, when he says simply, גערת ורים, the word *destroy* agrees more aptly, according to the principles of grammar. Notwithstanding, it makes little difference to the effect of the matter: for the prophet's design is not doubtful; namely, that God's judgments taught him to set his mind on the study of the law. And truly we must not tarry till God chastise us with his rods, but when he punisheth the ungodly and the despisers of his word, we are insensate indeed if his scourges instruct us not. And, doubtless, it is the singular mercy of God, when he spares us, and alarms us at a distance, to bring us to him without touching us or chastising us at all. Neither is it for nought that he terms all unbelievers *proud*. For it is only faith that makes us lowly, and all rebelliousness springs from pride. And hereby we gather how behoveful it is to consider God's judgments heedfully and diligently, whereby he suppresseth such overweening. For as long as the unestablished see the wicked rise up furiously against God, frowardly shaking off all restraint, and scorning all godliness with impunity, they begin to doubt whether there sit any God as judge in heaven. Although, therefore, God wink for a time, yet as soon as he setteth forth any example, we may assuredly believe that God hath not in vain threatened the transgressors of his law; and so let it come to our remembrance, that all are cursed who depart from him. Furthermore, it is to be noted,

that by *stepping aside* is not betokened every manner of fault, but only the unbridled licentiousness that springs from the wicked contempt of God. It is, indeed, a universal sentence, that *every one is cursed who continueth not in all the things that are written*; Deut. xxvii. 26. But as God of his fatherly kindness beareth with those that halt through the defect of infirmity, here he treats specifically of the judgments which he executeth against the reprobates. And Isaiah, xxvi. 9, shews that the end of them is, that the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness by them.

22 *Take from me, &c.*] This verse may be understood two ways. We know that though God's children bear themselves uprightly, yet are they subject to many slanders: and therefore the faithful have good cause to desire God to defend the unfeigned piety which they cultivate against venomous tongues. Neither will it be unsuitable to interpret it thus: Lord, forasmuch as I know myself to be without offence, and that thou also art a witness of my unfeigned integrity, suffer not the wicked to defame my life by heaping false reports upon me. But the sentence will be fuller if it be read in one strain, thus: O God, suffer not the ungodly to scoff at me for my endeavouring to keep thy law. For it is a wickedness that has reigned in the world even from the beginning, that the worshippers of God have been twitted with their simplicity in way of reproach, and mocked for it, even as at this day also the same reproaches are bandied about against God's children, as though, being not content with the usual manner of living, they would take upon them to be wiser than their fellows. For that saying of Isaiah, viii. 18, *Behold, I and my children, whom thou hast given me, are as a portent*, must be fulfilled now also; so that God's children, together with Christ their head, are accounted as monsters among the profane: according also as Peter testifies, that *they condemn us of madness, because we follow not their ways*, 1 Pet. iv. 4. And forasmuch as this reproach redounds to the dishonour of God, if they are had in derision for their pure embracing of God's law, the prophet does rightly in desiring that these scoffings may be repressed. And Isaiah also, xxii. 22, teaches us by his own example to flee to this refuge; that when the wicked fiercely cast forth their reproaches upon earth, our judge notwithstanding sitteth in heaven. In the next verse the prophet avouches more plainly that he has not prayed in vain unto the Lord to defend him from such reproaches, because he was had in derision not only of the common sort, and of the very dregs, but also even of the great men, who sat as judges: For by *sitting* he betokens that they had spoken falsely and



unjustly of him, not only in their chambers and at their tables, but also publicly and on the very judgment-seat, where right and law was to be ministered. And therefore he uses the particle **וְ**, which, by a covert comparison between the privy mutterings of the common people and the proud judgments of these great men, enlarges the heinousness of the matter. Meanwhile, however, we see how steadfastly he persisted in following after godliness: for as by this wily artifice Satan attempted to drive him to despair, he says he sought remedy from meditating on God's law. And here we are taught that it is no novelty, if judges wrongfully oppress God's servants, and rail at their godliness. If David could not escape this reproach, why should we at this day look to be privileged? notwithstanding, we may learn at the same time that there is no greater fondness than to hang upon the judgments of men, because in so doing we should needs waver every minute of an hour. Wherefore let it suffice us to be approved of God, though men wrongfully misreport us, and not only the obscure vulgar, but also the very judges themselves, at whose hands more indifference were to be looked for.

24 *Also thy testimonies, &c.*] The particle **וְ**, connects this verse with the last. It is an example of rare fortitude not to alter one's purpose, nor waver when the world judges amiss of us, but to go through with the minding of God's law. Now, therefore, the prophet teaches in what way he struggled through this temptation. *Verily*, says he, *thy testimonies are my delight*; that is, Although the wrongful dealing of men, in blaming me falsely, is bitter and painful to me, yet are the delights of thy law a sufficient recompense. He adds, that God's testimonies are *his counsellors*; by which manner of speaking he denotes that he rests not contented with his own understanding, but seeks counsel at the word of God. And this is to be marked advisedly: for we see how blind affections direct men in ordering their life. From whence does the covetous man fetch counsel, but from that false principle which he has imagined to himself, that nothing is better than riches? Why do ambitious men seek only elevation, but because they deem that nothing is better than to bear honourable rank in the world? It is no marvel, therefore, that men are so wretchedly misled, considering that they resign themselves to be ruled by such pernicious counsellors. But when we are ruled by God's word, and when our only wisdom is to follow obediently whatsoever the same prescribes, then will access be closed to all deceits, as well of our own flesh, as of the world, and

then shall we stand invincible against all assaults of temptations.

25 My soul hath cleaved unto the dust, quicken me according to thy word.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou hast answered me : teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me understand the way of thy commandments, and I will be mindful of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul droppeth away for grief: raise me up according to thy word.

29 Take from me the way of falsehood ; and gratify me with thy law.

30 I have chosen the way of truth, *and* I have set thy judgments *before me*.

31 I have cleaved to thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.

25 *My soul hath cleaved, &c.*] He means that he despaired of life, no less than if he had been shut up in his grave; which is worthy to be noted, lest it dishearten or grieve us to pass through divers deaths as often as God shall think it good. And by his own example he teaches us that when we see nothing before us but death, and all hope seems annihilated, we must nevertheless direct our prayers to God, in whose hand are the issues of death, according as we have seen in Psalm lxxviii. 21, and whose proper office it is to restore life to those that are dead. However, as it is a hard encounter, therefore he calls himself and others back to God's promises. For when he says, *according to thy word*, he confesses that there is no hope left for him, if he shall depart from the word of God. But as God hath assured us that the life of the godly is in his hand and keeping, though he is fast bound in his grave, yet he raises up himself to hope for life.

26 *I have declared, &c.*] In the first part of this verse he avouches himself to have prayed without dissimulation, and not to have followed the example of the proud, who, upon trust of their own wisdom, strength, and ability, flee not to God. For he is said to declare his ways to God, who dares

attempt or take in hand nothing, but by his aid, and who, depending wholly upon his providence, submits all his designs to his will, and does as it were lay down all his affections in his lap; doing all this faithfully, and not as the hypocrites, who pretend one thing with their tongue, and hide another thing within their heart. Also he adds that he was heard, which availed him not a little in strengthening his hope for the time to come. In the second member he avouches again that he esteems nothing more than to attain to the true understanding of the law. For there are many, indeed, that lay open their desires before God, but they would have him obedient to their foolish lusts. And therefore the prophet says he covets nothing more than to be taught in God's statutes aright. Which he confirms also in the next verse, when he desires again to have this understanding given him. And in both the places it is to be noted that though the law of God be set before our eyes, yet unless God's spirit be added as our inward instructor, we cannot get much by the reading of it. To proceed; where I have put, *I will be mindful*, some interpreters translate it, *I will entreat*; and the word *נִזְכָּר* is referred as well to the outward speaking, as to the inward thinking. But the latter signification agrees best with this place. For thus do I resolve the prophet's words; That I may be mindful of thy wondrous works, make me to understand thy commandments. For we know that God's law is unsavoury to us, until he have cleansed our minds that they may perceive the taste of true wisdom. And of this fastidiousness springs sloth, so that it grieveth the world to give ear reverently to God's law, because we taste not the wonderful wisdom which is laid up there. Not without cause, therefore, does the prophet desire to have the gate of understanding opened to him by the gift of God. Herewith also is to be learned that according as we are endued with the spirit of understanding, so must the reverence of God's law, and the desire to exercise ourselves thereon, increase in us.

28 *My soul droppeth, &c.*] In the same manner as a little before he said his soul had cleaved to the dust; so now, almost in the like sense, he complains that it shed away for grief. Though some think he alludes to tears, as if he had said that his soul had been melted into tears. But the simpler meaning is, that his strength shed away like water. And the verb, indeed, is of the future tense, but it denotes a continual act. Moreover, the prophet determines that the remedy of extreme sorrow is if God stretch out his hand. For like as erewhile when he lay for dead, he conceived hope of rising up again by God's grace; so now also, by the same

grace, he hopes for restitution of new and full vigour, although he has been brought to nothing. And he repeats that part, *according to thy word*, because God's power would afford us no comfort without his word. But when God meeteth us, although courage and strength fail us, his promise must be of sufficient force to confirm us.

29 *Take from me the way of falsehood, &c.*] Because he knew how prone men's inclinations are to vanity and lying, in the former place he desires to have his mind purged, lest, being entangled in Satan's wiles, it might slip into error. And afterwards, that he may beware of lying, he requests to be fenced with the doctrine of the law. Nevertheless, the second member is interpreted variously. For some translate it, *make thy law to be pleasant to me*: and truly, forasmuch as the law is hateful to the flesh, which it coerces, there is good reason why God should be desired to make it sweet and pleasant to us. Others expound it, *have mercy upon me concerning thy law*, as though the prophet should derive mercy from the very wellspring thereof, which is because God hath promised it to the faithful in his law. Either of these senses seems to me to be forced; and therefore I more gladly embrace this third, *grant thou me thy law of free gift*. But the word *נָתַתָּה* could not be translated otherwise than *gratify thou me*, or *pleasure thou me with thy law*, which is indeed a coarse and barbarous phrase in Latin; but it was the same to me, provided the readers might understand the prophet's mind. Now have we the effect of it: for, as we are possessed with dulness, nothing is easier than for errors to wind themselves into us. By means whereof it happens, that we are carried away into divers errors if God furnish us not with the spirit of wisdom. And the manner of this furnishing is expressed; namely, that he should instruct us in his law. But he has put here the word *gratify*, as if he had said, Truly it is an incomparable benefit, that thou guidest men aright by the law; but as thou bestowest it of free gift, I doubt not to request thee to admit me to the fruition of this good thing. If, then, the prophet, who had long since served God, now earnestly desiring to make fresh advances, petitions not that more full grace should be paid him as due for his deserts, but acknowledges it to be the free reward of God, then falls to the ground that wicked forgery which has reigned in the papacy, that the increase of grace is yielded to deservings.

30 *I have chosen, &c.*] In this verse, and in the next, he avouches himself to have been so minded as that he desired nothing more than to follow what is right and true. It is not for nought that here is put the word *chose*. For

that which is said in the old proverb, namely, that man's life is as it were in the point where two ways meet, pertains not only to the general course, but also to every several action. For as soon as we take never so little a thing in hand, we are haled hither and thither, and as if carried away with a tempest, are bewildered with conflicting counsels. Therefore, that the prophet might proceed steadfastly in the right way, he says he was fully purposed and determined not to leave the truth. By this means he gives us to understand, that he was not quite clear from all temptations, but yet prevailed against them, because he had set his mind earnestly to the keeping of the law. To the same purpose makes the latter member, where he says he had set God's judgments before him. For it were no fixed choice, unless the faithful exercised themselves in the continual beholding of the law, without giving their eyes leave to wander. In the verse following, he not only sets forth this godly affection, but also joins with it a prayer, that he might not sink confounded under the scornings of the ungodly, while he gave himself wholly to God's law. He repeats now the same word that he had used before, when he said his soul cleaved to the dust. And thus he declares how he had embraced God's law so firmly, that he could not be plucked from it. Therefore, inasmuch as he is afraid of being put to shame, or overwhelmed with reproaches, we gather that the more sincerely each man addicts himself to God, the more he provokes unclean and venomous tongues against him.

32 *I will run the way, &c.*] The prophet means, that when God shall have given him cheerfulness, he will be vigorous and cheerful enough, yea, and so constant, that he shall not faint in the midst of his race. By which words he tacitly confesses, that until God enlarge men's hearts, they shall not only be dull, but also unable to stir one foot in their endeavour to do well. But as soon as God hath enlarged their hearts, they shall be able enough not only to walk, but also to run. Meanwhile he warns us, that the true keeping of the law not only consists in outward works, but also requires willing obedience, so that the heart must after a sort dilate itself. Not that it can so frame itself of its own motion, but because when its hardness and stubbornness are corrected, it offers itself freely, and is no longer confined by its own narrowness. Lastly, this place teaches that when God hath framed our minds to this largeness, we shall not want strength, because together with right affection God will also supply us with ability, that our feet may be ready to run.

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end.

34 Make me understand, and I will observe thy law, and keep it with my whole heart.

35 Guide me in the way of thy statutes; for therein is my pleasure.

36 Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: quicken me in thy way.

38 Make good thy word unto thy servant, which is *given* to the fear of thee.

39 Take away my reproach which I am afraid of; for thy judgments are good.

40 Behold, I have had a longing unto thy commandments: quicken me in thy righteousness.

33 *Teach me, O Lord, &c.*] Yet again he repeats the prayer which he uses oftentimes in this Psalm; for it greatly concerns us to believe that the chief thing in this life is to be governed by God. For we see that the greater part think they should desire anything at God's hand, rather than this. Therefore the Holy Ghost harpeth continually upon this wish, which ought constantly to recur to us that not only such as are novices and unskilful learners, but also even such as have made great progress, should not cease to press on further. And because the spirit of understanding is given from heaven, they must desire to be brought to the true knowledge of the law by the secret instinct of the same. For in the second member the prophet shews of what kind of doctrine he speaks; namely, of such as is of force to frame a man's heart aright. The interpreters, however, expound the word *כֶּסֶף* two ways. Some take it for *wages*, or *hire*, in this sense; When I am well and thoroughly taught, I shall perceive that they labour not in vain who addict themselves to the keeping of thy law; and therefore I will keep thy commandments for the reward's sake, because thou never disappointest thy servants. Others translate it, *unto the end*; because whom God teacheth effectually, them also doth he at the same time strengthen, that they should not tire in the midst of their journey, but hold on stoutly to the mark without weariness. I deny not, indeed, that he speaks of the grace of perseverance; but let the readers consider



whether this verse may not be read simply as the words sound. For the word *unto* is not expressed by the prophet; but he says, *I will keep that end*; that is, as an aim, appositively; and so the meaning would be, Lord, I have need to be taught continually, that I may not fall short of, but always be aiming still at my mark: for thou commandest me to run in thy lists on condition that death should be my mark. But this constancy is not to be found in me, unless thou teach me daily; but if thou be my guide, I shall always keep watch, and never cast mine eyes aside from my end or mark. Nevertheless, I have in my translation set down that which was more received.

34 *Make me to understand, &c.*] First he instructs us that true wisdom is to fetch wisdom only out of God's law, so that it may hold us in fear and awe of him. Now in desiring to have this bestowed upon him by God's gift, he confesses that men aim at anything rather than that, utterly blinded as they are by fleshly reason. And certainly it is far from the common opinion of men to employ all their endeavours to the keeping of God's law. For the world esteems none wise but such as make good provision for their own interests, and such as are acute and politic in the affairs of this earthly life, yea, and such as excel in wiliness to beguile the simple. But the prophet, contrariwise, avouches men to be void of true understanding as long as the fear of God bears not the chief sway. For he seeks no other acuteness for himself, but that he may learn to yield himself wholly to God's governance. By the way also he confesses this to be the special gift of God, and not to be attained by man's own labour or policy. For if every man were meet to be his own instructor, this prayer were superfluous. Again; as the observing of God's law is no common matter, he uses two words; as if he should say, Lord, it is a high and hard matter to keep thy law strictly as it becomes us to keep it, which prescribes a cleanness more than man's nature admits: but yet will I not give over, upon trust of the light of thy heavenly spirit. Notwithstanding, the sense will be the clearer if we explain the words thus: Give me understanding, that I may keep and observe thy law with my whole heart. And mention is made of *the whole heart*, that we may know that those are far from the righteousness of the law, who hold but their outward senses in awe, so that they may do nothing worthy of blame in the sight of the world. For God putteth a bridle chiefly upon men's hearts, to the end that pure integrity may flourish there, whose fruits may appear afterwards in the life. And this spiritual observing of the law demonstrates the better how

needful it is that we should be framed to it by the hand of God.

35 *Guide me, &c.*] That the prophet repeats this sentence from time to time is not superfluous. For whereas the end for which men live, is that they should profit in God's school, we see how the world draws them hither and thither with its enticements, and they themselves also devise innumerable things to call themselves away. And what follows is to be marked, *that it is his pleasure*. For it is a mark of rare virtue for a man so to gather in his thoughts and affections, that taking leave of all the flatteries that sooth the flesh, he delights himself in nothing else but in serving of God. And yet the prophet, having gotten this victory, perceives that he wants something still. Therefore he calls upon God anew for aid, that his desire may come to full effect; according as Paul says, Phil. i. 13, *Now it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do*. And it is to be considered that he boasts not here of the inward motion of his own nature, but sets forth the grace which he has received, that God may make perfect the work which he hath begun; as if he had said, Lord, thou that hast given me mind, give me also strength. Furthermore, the word *pleasure* is tacitly opposed to the lusts of the flesh, which hold men's hearts fettered in their enticements.

36 *Incline my heart, &c.*] First he acknowledges that man's heart is so far from obedience to God's righteousness, that it rather sways to the contrary side. For if we were inclined to the righteousness of the law by nature and of our own accord, it had been in vain for him to have said, *Incline my heart*. It follows, therefore, that our hearts conceive nothing but what is sinful, and that they are given altogether to stubbornness until God bend them the contrary way. We must advisedly mark this acknowledgment of the prophet, that man's nature is so corrupted that it covets anything rather than that which is rightful, until it be bowed to new teachableness by God's own hand, so that it may begin to incline to good. And in the other member the prophet shews what hinders men that they cannot attain to the desire of righteousness; namely, because they are prone to *covetousness*. And by the figure synecdoche the species is put for the genus. For *עָבַר* signifies *to deal violently*, as *to covet*, or *defraud*; but the term *covetousness* agrees best, provided we understand that the prophet has chosen this species *which is the root of all evil*? 1 Tim. vi. 10, to shew that nothing is more contrary to the righteousness of God. Meanwhile we are taught in general that we are held entangled in wicked and sinful affections, so

that our hearts abhor the study of God's law, until God inspire us with a forwardness unto good.

**37** *Turn away mine eyes, &c.*] We are taught by these words that all our senses are so overrun with vanity, that it is no marvel that they are estranged from the pursuit of uprightness till they are cleansed and formed anew. Nay, whereas in the former verse he said that wickedness reigned in men's hearts, now he extends the same to the outward senses also; as if he should say, the malady of concupiscence not only lurks in men's minds, but also is diffused over all parts, so that neither eyes, nor ears, nor feet, nor hands retain their nature sound and perfect, neither is anything at all free from corruptness. And certainly we know that the stain of original sin does not rest in some one part of a man only, but possesses his whole soul and body. For if our eyes must needs be turned away from vanity by the special grace of God, it follows that as soon as they are open they are eagerly set on Satan's deceits, which obtrude themselves before them everywhere. If Satan did but lay snares for us, and of we ourselves were circumspect enough to guard against his deceits, it could not be properly said that God turneth away our eyes from vanity. But forasmuch as of their own nature they are given to gazing upon evil allurements, they had need to be plucked back. As often, then, as we open our eyes, let us bear in mind that two gates are set open for the devil, whereat to enter into our soul, except God set his Holy Spirit to ward him off. And what he says of the eyes belongs to all the other senses, for here also is the figure synecdoche. And the latter member answers thereto. For though others bring other interpretations, yet I suppose the natural meaning is this: Lord, forasmuch as men's lives are accursed as long as they apply their powers to sinning, grant that whatsoever ability is in me may breathe nothing but the righteousness which thou prescribest. That this may appear the better, it behoves us to hold this for a principle; that the seeing of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, the walking of the feet, and the feeling of the hands, are doubtless the precious gifts of God; and also that it is a more excellent gift that we are endued with reason and will; and yet for all this there is no sight of eye, no motion of the senses, no thought of the mind, whereunto there cleaves not some vice and unholiness. As such is the case, worthily does the prophet offer himself wholly to God, to be mortified by him, so that he may begin to live a new life.

**38** *Make good thy word, &c.*] Here is briefly pointed out the right and only end of prayer; namely, that the

effect of God's promises may come to us. Whence it follows that they do amiss who give themselves liberty to utter what comes uppermost in their prayers. For we see the prophet permits not himself to crave or wish any other thing than God hath vouchsafed to promise. And assuredly, too importunate is the boldness of those that rush into God's presence uncalled by any word of his, as if they would subject God to their caprice. The reason also that follows is to be marked; namely, because *he is given to the fear of thee*, for the relative, *לפני*, which implies as much as *for*, or *because*. For the prophet means, that he does not stop short in earthly commodities, as worldlings are wont to do, nor untowardly abuses God's promises to grasp after the delights of the flesh, but makes the fear and awe of God his aim. And truly the best assurance of obtaining is when we separate not our desires from God's service, but crave only that he may reign in us.

39 *Take away, &c.*] It is not sufficiently clear what reproach he designates. As he knew that many slanderers lay, as it were, on the watch for him, to take occasion to rail upon him, if they might chance to catch him in any offence, he had just cause to be afraid of falling into such infamy, and that through his own fault. It might be also that he feared some other reproach, because he knew that wicked men wantonly speak evil of the best, and by their calumnies wrest their good actions to a malignant interpretation. The reason is added, that forasmuch as *God's judgments are good*, God should hamper the wicked tongues which spit out the venom of their spleen against guiltless persons who reverently observe God's law. If any one prefer to understand the reproach in respect of God, the sense will be tolerably applicable, thus: that the prophet, who coveted only to make his life approved before God, should desire no more than to escape the judgment of a reprobate person, when he shall appear at his judgment-seat: in just the same sense as if with a noble and elevated courage he should look down with contempt upon all the pratings of men upon earth, provided he might stand clear in the sight of God. And truly it becomes holy men to fear most of all this reproach, that they be not cast with shame at God's tribunal.

40 *Behold, I have, &c.*] Again he repeats that which he had protested a little before; namely, that he is endued with a godly affection, and that he loves uprightness; and all that remains is, that God should finish the work that he had begun. If this exposition be approved, *to be quickened in God's righteousness* will import as much as *to be quickened in his way*. And truly *God's righteousness* is in this Psalm

often put for *God's law*, or the rule of righteous life, and in this way will the two members of this verse cohere the better, thus : Lord, this now is a notable gift of thy grace, that thou hast inspired me with a steadfast desire to keep thy law : but yet there wants this, that the same working of thine may shew itself in my whole life. But as the term *righteousness* has a double meaning, it shall be free for the readers to take it as though he had said, Lord, for thy goodness sake, which thou art wont to use towards all those that are thine, set me up again, defend me, and maintain me. I have shewn, however, already, what I liked best.

41 And let thy mercies come unto me, O Lord ; and thy welfare, according to thy word.

42 And I will answer thy word to him that railleth upon me : because I have trusted in thy word.

43 And take not the word of truth over-long out of my mouth ; for I wait for thy judgments.

44 And I will keep thy law always for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk in largeness : because I have sought out thy statutes.

46 And I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I reach out unto thy statutes, which I have loved ; and I will be musing upon thy commandments.

41 *And let thy, &c.*] There is no doubt, that, as he sets down *God's mercies* in the first place, and afterwards adds *welfare*, he puts the cause before the effect, as the order of nature requires. And by this means he confesses that he cannot be saved but by the mere mercy of God. Moreover, while he wishes to have welfare of free gift, he at the same time leans upon the promise, as we have seen already in other places. In the second verse he boasts that he shall be armed with a singular defence against the slanders of his enemies, because he has trusted in God's word. Though we may turn the future tense into the mood of wishing, as many do ; as if he had said, Lord, forasmuch as I have trusted in thy word, grant that my mouth may be opened wide to disprove their evil-speaking, and suffer me not to be

dumb when they heap false slanders upon me. Whichever way you please to take it, first, we are taught that there shall never be wanting evil-tongued persons to rail upon God's children without ceasing, be they never so guiltless. And again, it is doubtful of what kind of reproach he speaks, because the wicked not only bespatter the children of God with infamy, but also scoff and jest at their faith. Now, forasmuch as this second exposition suits the context best, I readily embrace it, for David sets his own trust in God against their scornfulness; as if he had said, I shall have wherewith to answer their false boastings, because God disappointeth not those that trust in him. But if any one choose to extend it to both, I do not oppose it. Moreover, he says not simply, that he had trusted *in God*, but that he had trusted *in God's word*, because his word is the ground of hope. Also the mutual relation is to be marked between *word* and *word*; for if God should not out of his word supply us with another word to defend us with, we should at once be overwhelmed with the froward insolence of the ungodly. Therefore, if we covet to stand unmoved against the assaults of the world, here is shewn us the principle of our fortitude, namely, to trust in God's word; wherewith, if we are guarded, God's Spirit bids us courageously despise the venomous blasphemies of the wicked. And that we may disprove the same, to the word of hope he annexes the word of confession.

43 *Take not away, &c.*] It might be asked, why he desires rather to have his tongue furnished, than his heart fortified, with the word of truth. For this latter is both prior in order, and also of greater importance. For how little shall it profit men to have their tongues ready and eloquent, if their hearts be void of faithfulness! But, on the contrary, where there is substantial faith, there also the tongue follows of its own accord. I answer, that David was not so careful for the outward profession, but that he preferred the faithfulness of the heart before it: but as he is speaking to God, it is no marvel though he speak only of the profession, under which, notwithstanding, he comprehends the other also; just as if he had said, Lord, not only uphold thou my heart with faith, that I may not be overwhelmed with temptations; but also grant that my tongue may have full liberty, so that I may fearlessly magnify thee among men. We see how, in desiring to have boldness of speech granted to him, he begins at the heart. Again, it may be asked here, why he says *over-long*, as though the fact were, that he cared not for being destitute of the word for a little while. But that were very unreasonable, since it behoves us to be careful



every moment, lest at any time we may be surprised unarmed and naked. The solution of this knot must be fetched from our own experience. For in this infirmity of the flesh it can hardly be but that now and then even the stoutest of all quake for fear, when Satan assaults them with extraordinary violence. And although their faith quail not, yet we perceive that it shrinks: especially they are not supplied with such presence of mind, that words always flow from their tongues with uniform tenor, and they have at all times a ready answer to the scoffs of the ungodly; but rather they stagger, and are abashed for a little while. David, therefore, in the consciousness of this infirmity, which betrays itself in all men, tempers his prayer in thiswise: Although I have not always at hand such boldness of utterance as were to be wished, yet suffer thou me not to be dumb any long time. By which words the prophet tacitly acknowledges himself not to have been so steadfast and courageous as was meet, but that his tongue was, as it were, tied up for fear. And hence, no doubt, it is to be learned, that the power of speaking boldly is no more in our own power than are the affections of the heart. So far, then, as God ruleth our tongues, they are ready to utter freely; but as soon as he withdraweth the spirit of courage, not only our hearts faint, or rather be prostrate, but also our tongues become mute. And he adds the reason, namely, because *he had waited for God's judgments*, for so speaks he, word for word. Whereby we gather that *judgments* are not only taken for the commandments of the law, but also that by the same term are denoted the promises which peculiarly keep up our expectation. For when some, deriving it from the root *חָוַל*, translate it, *I trembled at thy judgments*, I cannot tell whether it agrees or no. Of this I am sure, that when they understand *punishments* by *judgments*, it is irrelevant to the matter.

44 *And I will keep, &c.*] Here he promises to be an earnest follower of the law, not for a few days, but even to his life's end. And his putting the three words, *תָּמִיד*, *עַל־*, and *עָלָם*, in one sense, is not a superfluous accumulation, for thereby he gives an inkling that if the faithful stand not manfully in resistance, the fear of God may be expelled from their breasts from time to time by various temptations, so that they would swerve from the earnest following of the law. Therefore, that he may be the readier for the encounter, he sets before him the hardness of it. The next verse may be read in the mood of wishing. Notwithstanding, let us follow that which is most received; namely, that David glories that his way shall be made level and unencumbered before him, because he seeks diligently after God's com-

mandments; which is all one with *walking in largeness*. For we know that men's ways are most commonly either thorny or narrowed with straits, because they lay diverse stumbling-blocks in their own ways, or else entangle themselves in circuities. Thus it comes to pass, that while no man can find in his heart to submit himself to God's word, and to resign himself to be ruled by it, every man abides the punishment of this arrogance. For God layeth snares for us round about us, putteth pitfalls in our way, cutteth off our paths with many unevennesses, and finally shutteth us up in bottomless deeps; and the more cunning any man is, the more he is distressed with difficulties. And this verse teaches, that if any man obey God simply, he shall have this reward for his labour, that he may journey with a secure and tranquil mind; and that, if he happen to meet with any distresses, yet shall he find a way out. For however willingly the faithful yield themselves to be taught of God, yet it often happens that they are perplexed with doubt. Nevertheless, at length is fulfilled that saying of Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 8, that although they be in danger, yet abide they not in distress, because it is God's part to make them a way where no way is. Nay rather, although they be sorrowfully oppressed, yet walk they nevertheless at large, because they commit the uncertain issues of things in suchwise to God, that they doubt not but by his guiding they shall have free passage, even out of bottomless pits.

46 *And I will speak, &c.*] He seems here to promise himself assuredly the thing that he had prayed for before. For after he has said, *Take not the word out of my mouth*, now, having as it were obtained his desire, he leaps up, and denies that he will be tongue-tied, although he were to speak before kings. For there is no doubt but he means that though all the whole world were against him, yet would he have presence of mind to maintain God's glory boldly. But he chooses kings, who are dreadful above other men, and with their haughty bearing stop the mouths of God's witnesses. Oftentimes, indeed, it happens that we give place even to the basest sort of men. For as soon as any man sets himself against God's word, we shrink within ourselves fearfully, and that freeness which we professed at first vanishes away. But most of all does our timidity betray itself, when we come before the thrones of kings. This is the reason why David says not only that he will stand stoutly against his adversaries of the baser sort, but also that he will continue steadfast and undaunted even before kings. By which words we are taught, that then only have we profited aright in God's word, when our minds are so well-fenced against

the fear of men, at such times as the world endeavours to cast them down, that they are not afraid even of the presence of kings. For it is an outrageous shame, that God's glory should be overwhelmed by their empty splendours.

47 *And I will delight myself, &c.*] A nearly similar sentence has he alleged before. The effect is, that he had so set his love upon God's commandments, that he could find nothing more pleasant to him than the continual minding of them. For by the word *delight* is expressed the earnestness of his love. To the same purpose pertains what he adds immediately, *I will reach out my hands*. For what we catch at with extended hands, it is certain we eagerly desire: therefore he denotes metaphorically the ardour of his longing. For if a man should pretend such an affection by his gesture, and yet neglect God's law in all the affairs of his life, it would be the rankest hypocrisy. And again he avouches that the said earnest and glowing affection springs from this, that the sweetness of the law has riveted our affections on it. Lastly, he says he *will be musing upon God's testimonies*. For I doubt not but that the word *mw* ought to be referred to the secret minding or musing wherein God's children exercise themselves; which the majority of interpreters also admit.

49 Remember thy word unto thy servant, whereupon thou hast granted me to trust.

50 It is my comfort in my trouble: for thy word quickeneth me.

51 The proud have had me over-long in derision: yet have I not stepped aside from thy law.

52 Lord, I have remembered thy judgments from everlasting; and I have comforted me.

53 Fear is come upon me for the ungodly, that forsake thy law.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

55 In the night-time have I thought upon thy name, O Lord, and I keep thy law.

56 This has betided me, because I have observed thy statutes.

49 *Remember thy word, &c.*] He prays God to perform indeed the thing that he hath promised: for the event shews that God is mindful of his word. And that he treats

of promises, we gather from the end of the verse, where he says he had occasion of hope given unto him; which could not be unless grace had been offered him. And in the second verse he avouches that although God held him in suspense, yet he rested upon his word. By the way, he declares that in his troubles and cares he sought not after vain comforts, as worldlings are wont to do, who gaze hither and thither for relief of their miseries, and if any allurements please their fancies, assuage their sorrows with such manner of plasters. But the prophet says he was content with the only word of God, and that he had found life there, even when all other things failed him: meanwhile he tacitly confesses that if he recover not heart by God's word, he shall be but a dead man. And truly, though worldly men often exhibit a sort of air-blown spirits in their afflictions, yet are they void of inward energy of mind. Therefore, worthily does the prophet say that the faithful live and are sustained in their miseries, in this only respect, because *God's word breatheth life into them*. Wherefore, if we mind well God's word, we shall live even in the midst of death, and there shall be no heaviness so great but it shall be healed by that medicine. And that we are left destitute of relief in our adversities, comes to pass through our own fault, because we either despise or neglect God's word, and deceive ourselves studiously with vain comforts.

51 *The proud have, &c.*] This example is singularly useful to teach us that although our simplicity be subject to the scorn of the wicked, yet must their insolence be repelled by inflexible constancy, lest at any time a disdain of the law of God should steal over us. For we see many sink under this temptation, who otherwise would be forward to the fear of God. Furthermore, the earth has ever been fraught with heathenish despisers of God, and at this day it is almost inundated with them. Wherefore, if we fortify not our hearts against their scoffs, there will be no steadiness in our faith. And when he calls the unbelievers *proud*, he designates them by their proper name: for the wisdom of the faithless is to despise God, to set light by his judgments, to trample all godliness under foot, and finally, to pour contempt upon the heavenly kingdom. Neither would they run ahead so audaciously, were they not quite blinded with pride. Notwithstanding, the words must be resolved thus; Although the proud have mocked me, yet have I not stepped aside from the law. Also, the part *over-long*, is to be noted; for it denotes not that he was persecuted by the ungodly one time, or one day only, but that the encounter was renewed daily. Whence we gather, that the wicked took the greater

license because they were the more in number; according as the number of the godly, who serve God reverently, is always small. Wherefore, that we may continue undefiled, we must wrestle against a great rout and rabble of them.

52 *Lord, I have remembered, &c.*] In this Psalm God's judgments are commonly taken for his ordinances and decrees, as if one should term them his *rightnesses*. But here, by reason of the portion *from everlasting*, which is added, it is more likely that now they denote the examples whereby God hath shewn himself to be the righteous judge of the world: for to what intent should he say that God's law hath been from everlasting? Indeed this may be defended after some sort, because the uprightness which is shewn there, is not sprung up recently, but is indeed everlasting; inasmuch as the written law is but an avouchment of the law of nature, whereby God bringeth to our remembrance the things that are already rooted in our hearts. But I rather incline to the other sense, that David remembered God's judgments, by which he proved himself to have established his law for ever in the world. And this confirmation is very needful for us, because when God's hand is not seen openly, oftentimes his doctrine loses its authority. But when God punisheth the wicked, he confirmeth the things that he had spoken; by reason whereof also, punishments or penalties are in the civil law termed confirmations. But this agrees better with God's judgments, by which he confirms the authority of his law, as if there were a real proof superadded to his words. And inasmuch as he says he called to mind the most ancient of God's judgments, we may learn by this saying, that our own unthankfulness or apathy is to blame, that God's judgments come not rife enough to our remembrance, for the confirmation of our faith. For not an age has passed wherein God hath not exhibited apparent proofs to this end, that it might be truly said that God's judgments have flowed in a continual stream through all ages; and that the cause why they escape us is, that we vouchsafe not to open our eyes. If any man object, that it is contrary to the nature of God's judgments to comfort us, because they are calculated rather to put us in fear; the answer is easy, that the faithful are put in fear by God's judgments so far forth as is expedient for them to the mortifying of their flesh. Nevertheless, they have large matter of comfort offered them, inasmuch as they know thereby, that God hath a care of mankind. For they gather therefrom, that when the wicked have played the wantons awhile, they shall at length come to God's judgment-seat. And they themselves,

after they have gone through their warfare patiently, shall doubtless be safe under such a maintainer of their welfare.

53 *Fear hath caught hold, &c.*] This verse admits a two-fold sense; either that the prophet was sore grieved when he saw God's law broken by the wicked, or else that he shuddered at their destruction. For where some translate it *heat*, it flows not so aptly. Therefore, I hold still the term *fear*, or *dread*; and I think that thereby is denoted the vehemence of his zeal, inasmuch as he not only was grieved at the transgressions of the law, but also abominated as portentous the wicked boldness of them that made none account of God's law. And it is to be noted that it is no new kind of stumbling-block, if many shake off the yoke, and become rebellious against God. And it is worth while to mark it; because many seek a fond excuse from the corruptness of the time; as if they might be allowed to howl, while they lived among wolves. But we see that even in David's time there were many apostates, that fell from the true religion; and yet he shrank so little on that account, or was so little dismayed, that the fear of God rather kindled a holy indignation in his mind. What is to be done, then, if evil examples beset us on all sides, but that every one of us should enforce himself to protest against them? And herein is included a tacit antithesis between the deceitful soothing of ourselves, whereby we believe that all is lawful which is common, and the horror wherewith the prophet tells us that he was seized. If the wicked vaunt themselves, according to their lust against God, then, if we awake not to behold God's judgments, we pervert the same into occasion of wicked presumption or indifference. But, contrariwise, the prophet says he was seized with horror, because though he considered God's long forbearing on the one side, yet was he thoroughly persuaded that it could not be but God must at length exact punishment.

54 *Thy statutes, &c.*] He repeats his former saying, in another form of speech; namely, that God's law was his only, or chief delight in this life. For singing is a token of mirth. Moreover, as the saints are pilgrims in this world, and cannot be reckoned for God's children, and heirs of heaven, otherwise than by being sojourners upon earth, by the *house of pilgrimage* may be understood the course of this earthly life. But there seems to be denoted a special circumstance; that David, being banished from his country, ceased not to take comfort of his miseries out of God's law, or rather, such joy as overcame the grief of his banishment. For it was a proof of rare fortitude, that when he was bereft



of the sight of the temple, and could not come to the sacrifices, but was debarred of the exercises of godlinesses, yet he was not estranged from God. Therefore, *the house of his pilgrimage* is put in way of amplification, that being cast out of his country, he still kept God's law rooted in his heart; and although the bitterness of his banishment might have cast him down, yet he raised himself up to cheerfulness by thinking upon the law of God.

55 *In the night-time, &c.*] I read the whole verse in one strain, because the second member depends upon the first. For the prophet means that he was led to keep the law, by calling God to mind. For hence comes the contempt of the law, that scarcely any man has respect to God. Therefore the scripture, when it condemns men's wickedness, says *they have forgotten God*; Psalm l. 22, and lxxviii. 11, and cvi. 21. Contrariwise, David admonishes us that the remembrance of God is the only thing able to keep us in the fear of God, and in the observing of his law. And truly, as often as the majesty of God presents itself to our minds, the feeling of it must needs humble us, so that the thinking thereupon may provoke us to godliness. And although by the word *night-time*, he denotes not a minding of God for a moment, but a continual thinking upon him, yet does he therefore speak expressly of the night-time, because almost all men's senses are then overwhelmed; as if he had said, that while others are sleeping, then he minds God, even in his very sleep. There is also another reason why he put the night-time; namely, that we might know that although there were no witness or monitor by him, nay, though he was covered with darkness, yet he was no less intent in cherishing the remembrance of God, than if he had been standing upon a conspicuous stage.

56 *This has betided me, &c.*] I doubt not but the prophet under the pronoun *לני*, *this*, comprehends all God's benefits. But as he comes before God as in a matter then actually existing, he points to the objects, as it were, while he speaks. Therefore, under this word *this*, is included a recognition of all the many benefits he had been decked with. Or, at least, he declares that God had borne witness to his upright conduct, by some special deliverance. And yet he boasts not that he had deserved aught, as the Pharisees do, who, when they meet with any such matter in the scripture, forthwith seize on it to prove the desert of works. For the prophet's intent was but to set himself against the despisers of God, who impute all their prosperity to their own efforts and policy, or else ascribe it to fortune, burying God's providence in impious silence. The prophet, there-

fore, calls back himself and us to God, and puts us in mind that as God is a righteous judge, he hath laid up reward in store for godliness. Perhaps also by this holy boasting, he beats back the malicious slanders of the ungodly, by whom we have seen him sore assailed heretofore.

57 My portion, Lord, I have said, is to keep thy word.

58 I have made suit unto thy face with my whole heart; have mercy upon me, according to thy word.

59 I have considered mine own ways, and have turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60 I have made haste, and not deferred, to keep thy commandments.

61 The cords of the wicked have caught hold of me : *yet* have I not forgotten thy law.

62 At midnight will I rise to praise thee, for the judgments of thy righteousness.

63 I am a companion to all them that fear thee, and which keep thy statutes.

64 The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy : teach me thy statutes.

57 *My portion, Lord, &c.*] The construction of the words is doubtful. For both the word *Lord*, may be read in the nominative case, and the words *I have said*, may be referred as well to the former part, as to the second part of the sentence. One reading, therefore, is this; *The Lord is my portion, and therefore have I determined to keep thy law.* Another is this; *O God, who art my portion, I am determined to keep thy law.* The third is this; *I have said, or I am fully persuaded, that God is my portion, to keep his law.* The fourth is this; *I have said, or I am fully resolved, O Lord, that my portion is to keep thy law.* And this reading I embrace. Certainly this meaning is quite applicable; that as God is our portion, it ought to encourage us to the keeping of his law. And it has been seen already, in many other places, that God is called the heritage of the faithful because he alone sufficeth to make them perfectly happy. And surely, considering he hath chosen us for his peculiar possession, it is reasonable that we, on the other side, should rest ourselves on him alone. But if we can content ourselves with God alone, our minds also will be inclined to the keeping of his law, and we shall bid the lusts of the flesh fare-

well, and our greatest delight and fixed resolve will be to keep his law. Now although this exposition, as I said, gives no incoherent sense, and contains a profitable doctrine, yet the last construction of the four, which also I said I liked best, is the simplest; namely, Lord, I am fully resolved that the best heritage that can be for me, is to keep thy law. Akin to which is this saying of St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 6; *Godliness is the best gain*. And David compares the keeping of the law with all the counterfeit goods that attract men's lusts to them; as if he had said, Let every man covet what he thinks good, and enjoy his own delights; there is no reason why I should envy them, provided I may retain this my portion, which is, to devote myself to the word of God.

58 *I have made suit unto thy face, &c.*] David testifies in this verse that he ceased not from the duty of praying: for without prayer faith would become inactive and torpid. And although the manner of speaking which he uses, were harsh in other languages, yet among the Hebrews it expresses that familiar communication to which God admitteth and allureth his servants, when they come into his presence. Moreover, he knits up the sum of his requests in one word; namely, that he called upon God for mercy, the hope whereof he had conceived by his word. First, therefore, we may note that our sluggishness is awakened that we may exercise our faith by prayer. Secondly, that the chief point in praying is, that God of his free goodness should be merciful to us, have regard to our miseries, and relieve our want. For although God help us innumerable ways, and our necessities also are without number, yet must we chiefly and specially desire this one thing, that he will have mercy upon us; from whence all the rest flow. And thirdly, lest we should pour forth aimless prayers into the air, we must learn that God is set forth as it were a voluntary debtor in his own promises.

59 *I have considered.*] The effect is, that after the prophet had taken heed to the manner of his life, he purposed nothing else but to follow the teaching of the law. By which words he indirectly intimates that the reason why men range beyond bounds, and are miserably distracted amidst conflicting impulses is, that they indulge their humour inconsiderately. Indeed, every man watches intensely and applies his whole endeavour to that to which the lust of his mind inclines; but all of them are purblind in choosing the objects of pursuit. Nay rather, as though their eyes were sealed up, they are either carried away headlong, or else flutter from one object to another from listlessness.

Certain it is that no man considers his own ways advisedly : and therefore, not without cause does the prophet warn us that the beginning of a good life is for men to awake from sluggishness, and to consider their own ways, and at length to bethink themselves in earnest what it is to frame their course of life. In the second place, also, he teaches, that when a man is seriously purposed to regulate his life, he can bethink himself of no better thing than to follow whithersoever the Lord leadeth him. And certainly, if men were not besotted in their own thoughtlessness, they would eagerly choose God, with one consent, to be the guide of their life.

60 *I have made haste, &c.*] Although the verbs are of the time past, yet they denote a continued act. And the prophet shews with how great readiness he offered himself to the service of God. For *his hasting* denotes the fervour of his zeal. And whereas afterwards he says *he deferred not*, according to the custom of the Hebrew tongue he amplifies that which he had spoken of making haste. For as, among the Hebrews, *to speak and not to hold one's peace*, imports as much as to speak what the occasion requires, freely, advisedly, and without dissimulation, even so he is said *to make haste and not to defer*, who runs apace without hesitation and delay. Now if we call to mind our own slothfulness, and, on the other hand, the number of obstacles which Satan ceases not to cast in our ways, we may well gather that this was not added in vain. For though a man may be desirous to apply himself to the righteousness of God truly, and with his whole heart, yet we know what Paul says, Rom. vii. 15, 18, 19, namely, *that he performeth not the thing that he would do*. Though, therefore, there be no outward let to hinder us, yet are we hampered with so many impediments within, that nothing is more difficult than to hasten forward in the keeping of God's law. Nevertheless, it is to be considered that the prophet speaks here in the way of comparison, in respect of those that procrastinate through the most part of their life, and not only come hesitatingly and dilatorily unto God, but exhaust all their energies in debating the matter ; or else entangle themselves among crooked by-ways, that they come not to God at all. The prophet, then, was not more cheerful to serve God than Paul was, but only shews, in these words, that he cleared his course of encumbrances by strenuous exertions. And, by his example, he teaches that the excuses are fond which we pretend for our slothfulness, either from the obstacles presented by the world, or our own weakness.

61 *The routs of the wicked, &c.*] They that translate חַבְלֵי, *sorrows*, elicit no natural sense from it, and torture themselves as well as the prophet's words. There remain, then, two readings, and either of them is allowable; that is to say, *the cords of the ungodly have caught hold of me*, and *the routs of the wicked have robbed me*. Whichever of these you select, the prophet avouches that at what time Satan battered his godliness with sore engines of temptation, he persisted steadfastly in the following of God's law. Though *cords* may be understood two ways, either for the seducing enticements by which they essayed to entangle him in their company, or else for the frauds which they practised to his destruction. If the first interpretation is approved, David proclaims a rare virtue, namely, that when the wicked seemed to have involved him in their nets, yet he held himself still under the protection of God's law. Nevertheless, as it is admitted with more general consent, that the word חַבְלֵי imports as much as *to spoil* or *rob*, let us now take it in this sense, that the prophet, being vexed by troops on troops of the ungodly, and afterwards robbed and rifled at their pleasure, never forsook his ground; which was also a proof of consummate fortitude. For when we are abandoned to desperate perils, if God rescue us not, we begin, straightway, to doubt of his providence, and our godliness seems to be utterly fruitless; we surmise also that it is free and lawful for us to revenge; and amid these waves the remembrance of God's law is easily drowned. But the prophet tells us, that, after all, the only token of true godliness is, to continue uniformly in the love of God's law, and the steady observance of righteousness, when we are exposed as a prey to the ungodly, and perceive no help of God.

62 *At midnight, &c.*] In this verse he shews not only that he approved and, with all his heart, embraced whatsoever God's law contains; but also that he gave a token of thankfulness for being made partaker of so great a benefit. It seems to be but a common thing to assent to God when he teacheth us by his law; for who dares lift up his voice against him? But yet the world is very far from acknowledging God's doctrine to be rightful in all respects. First, such is the frowardness of our flesh, that every man would have somewhat either altered or taken away. Again, if men had the option, they had rather be ruled by their own will, than by God's word. In a word, there is a wide variance between the law of God and human reason, as well as human passions. Not a little, therefore, has he profited, who both embraces the heavenly doctrine obediently, and also, delighting himself rapturously therein, gives God thanks.

Still the prophet records not simply that he praises God's righteousness, but in saying that he arose at midnight, he expresses the earnestness of his desire. For there must needs be great earnestness in the studies and cares that break us of our sleep. At the same time, also, he gives us to understand that his rendering his testimony to the law of God was far removed from all ostentation, because by himself, and without witnesses, he glorified the righteousness of God with his encomiums.

63 *I am a companion, &c.*] He not only speaks of the brotherly love and concord which the faithful cultivate among themselves, but also means that whenever he lighted upon any man that feared God, he gave him his hand in token of fellowship; and that he had been not only one of the number and livery of God's servants, but also a helper of them. And surely this consent is required in all the godly, that each should advance other in the fear of God. And there seems to be a tacit comparison between this holy concord, wherein the faithful foster the worship of God and godliness among themselves, and the impious associations that prevail everywhere in the world. For we see how worldlings array their phalanxes against God, and help one another to overthrow God's religion. The more, therefore, does it become the children of God to be stirred up to the maintenance of a holy unity. He commends the faithful, first, for their fearing God, and secondly, for their keeping the law. For the fear of God is the root and original of all righteousness; and then, at length, does it appear that we fear God, and stand in awe of him, when we dedicate our life to his service.

64 *The earth, O Lord, &c.*] Here the prophet beseeches God by his infinite goodness, which is reflected in the whole world, to vouchsafe the treasure of his heavenly wisdom to him: a manner of praying which is of very great force. Therefore, where he says the earth is full of God's mercy, it is a kind of earnest entreaty. For he not only commends God's goodness in general, (as he does in other places,) for leaving no part of the world void of his bounteousness, and for exhibiting the same, not only towards mankind, but also to the brute beasts. What does he then? Verily, he desires to have God's mercy, which diffuses itself to all creatures, to be manifested to him in one thing, namely, that he may profit in God's law. Whereby we gather, that he set as great store by the gift of understanding, as by an inestimable treasure. Now if to be endued with the spirit of understanding be the chief token of God's favour, our own unbelief betrays our alienation from him. Now it behoves us to



call to mind, that, as I have said heretofore, our slothfulness is too shameful; who, being content with a slight taste of the heavenly doctrine, care not greatly about further profiting, when so renowned a teacher of the church endeavoured always desirously and earnestly to learn still. Besides this, it is certain that he treats not here of the outward doctrine, but of the secret enlightening of the mind, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The law was set forth indifferently to all men, but the prophet perceives that except he be enlightened by the Holy Ghost, the other will do him little good, and therefore he craves to be taught effectually.

65 Graciously hast thou dealt with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word.

66 Teach me the goodness of taste and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was brought low, I did amiss; but now I keep thy word.

68 Thou art good and gracious: teach me thy statutes.

69 The proud have trimmed a lie upon me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease: *but* I delight myself in thy law.

71 It is good for me that I was afflicted; that I may learn thy precepts.

72 Better is the law of thy mouth unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

65 *Graciously hast thou, &c.*] Word for word it is, *Thou hast done good, &c.* Which translation some understand generally; as though the prophet should avouch, that howsoever he may be dealt with at God's hand, he takes it in good part, because he perceives it shall turn to his welfare. But as there is mention expressly made of the promise, I doubt not but he commends God's faithfulness in performing the grace that he had promised; as if he should say he had found in very deed, or by the effect, that God is true and does not delude his servants with words. Therefore he alleges God's promises, because all his benefits flow to us from thence, not as out of the first headspring, but as it were by conduit-pipes. For although God's free goodness is the only thing that causes him to deal liberally with us, yet can we hope for nothing at his hand until he meet

us with his word. Now after David has confessed that he had found by experience how true God is in his promises, he adds such a request as we had in the last verse, namely, that he may grow in right understanding; although he uses somewhat different words, for here he puts *rightness of taste, and knowledge*. For as **דַּבָּר** signifies *to taste*, the noun that is derived from it is properly taken for *a taste*; it is, however, transferred to the mind. And there is no doubt David desires to have sound discretion and judgment, together with knowledge, given to him. For they that read it severally *goodness, and knowledge*, mar the whole sentence. Notwithstanding, that we may obtain the full meaning of the prophet, the latter member must be added. He says he believed God's precepts, that is to say, that he gladly embraced whatsoever is appointed in the law, and so he avouches himself to be teachable and obedient. And whereas he became so forward in obeying God by the guiding of the Holy Ghost, he requires to have another gift added, namely, the gift of perfect taste and understanding. Whence we gather that these two things (that is to say, to be endued with right affection, and to be wise in understanding) are distinctly required to the framing of the life aright. Since the prophet already believed God's commandments, doubtless that reverence sprang from a godly zeal; and yet not without cause is he afraid, lest he should go out of the way unadvisedly. We may learn, therefore, that after God hath framed our hearts to the obedience of his law, we must therewith crave wisdom at his hand wherewith to regulate our zeal.

67 *Before I was brought low, &c.*] Because the word **דַּבָּר** signifies sometimes *to speak*, or *to bear witness*, some like to read it thus: *Before I occupied myself in reading thy statutes, I went astray*. But this seems too constrained. Others go yet further off; namely, that at such time as the prophet went astray, he had not what to answer to God. But I will not stand about the disproving of these devices, because there is no ambiguity in the prophet's meaning. For in his own person he describes either the wantonness or the stubbornness that is common to all mankind; that is, that we never follow God till we are compelled by his chastisements. Truly it is a monstrous thing that we should stubbornly refuse to submit ourselves to God; and yet experience shews that when God beareth with us we evermore break forth into insolence. And assuredly, seeing that stubbornness must needs be corrected by forcible means in the prophet of God, much more is this kind of discipline needful for us. For seeing that the first step in

obedience is the mortifying of the flesh, which all men shun by nature, it is no marvel though God bring us to a sense of duty by manifold afflictions. Nay rather, as the flesh winces from time to time, even when it seems tamed, it is no wonder though God often bring us back to the rod. And this is done diverse ways. For God humbleth some by poverty, some by shame, some by diseases, some by domestic distresses, and some by hard and painful labours; and so, according to the diversity of vices, he applieth to each of them their appropriate remedies. Now we perceive how profitable a doctrine this confession contains. The prophet indeed speaks of himself, like as Jeremiah also, xxx. 18, says he was like an untamed bullock; but he sets before our eyes an image of the wantonness that is bred in all of us by nature. Too thankless are we, then, if this fruit which we reap from chastisements do not assuage or abate the bitterness of them. For nothing is more wretched than we, as long as we are rebellious against God. But the only means whereby God may bend us and tame us to obedience, is by disciplining us with his chastisements. Meanwhile the prophet teaches us by his own example, that at least (since God by subduing our hardness shews that he would fain have us to be his disciples) we should do our endeavour to become meek, and laying down all fierceness, willingly bear the yoke that he layeth upon us. The next verse needs no explanation, because it contains nearly the same meaning that the last verse of the former eight contains. For he beseeches God of his goodness, not that he may grow in riches and honour, nor swim in pleasure, but to grant him to profit in the understanding of the law. For whereas wellnigh all the world commonly implore God's gracious goodness, and wish that he should deal bounteously with them, according to the diversity of desires into which men are severally hurried by the intemperateness of the flesh, David avouches himself to be thoroughly satisfied if he may find God liberal in this one thing, which almost all men pass over with disdain.

69 *The proud have trimmed, &c.*] He declares that although the lewd sort interpreted all his acts malignantly, and by that artifice essayed to push him from his purpose of well-doing, yet he never altered his mind. It is a severe temptation when we are plunged into reproach and infamy undeservedly, and not only railed upon, but also brought in hatred of the world by wicked persons under specious pretences. For we see many, who otherwise are honest men and given to live uprightly, either fall or faint when they see themselves so unworthily rewarded. Wherefore so

much the more is the prophet's example to be noted, that the maliciousness of men may not by any means shake us; nor we cease to keep us still in the fear of God, howsoever they bereave us of the report of honesty in the sight of men; but hold ourselves content that our godliness shines at the judgment-seat of God, although the calumnies of men deface it. For as long as we depend upon the judgments of men, we shall always be wavering, as is said already. Again, however splendid our works are, yet we know there shall no account be made of them before God, if we seek the estimation of the world in them. Wherefore let us learn to direct our eyes to that heavenly stage, and to despise all misreports. Let the children of this world enjoy their reward, for a crown is laid up for us in heaven, and not in earth. Let us rid ourselves of the snares wherewith Satan goes about to hinder us, by bearing infamy willingly for a time. The word *טפל*, (which otherwise signifies *to join together*,) is here by an elegant metaphor taken for *to weave* or *to trim*, because the prophet was not only loaded with gross and rude reproaches, but they also invented crimes against him, not without cunning and colourableness, so that he might seem to be the blackest of characters. Now though they ceased not to weave him this web, yet he broke through it by invincible constancy; and locking up his heart, continued to hold the law of God in safe custody. And not without cause does he call them *proud*, for hence one may conjecture that they were not men of the common sort, but great men, who being puffed up with confidence in their honour and riches, rose up against him the more boldly. Surely he shews manifestly that he was trampled under foot by their insolence, no less than if he had been a dead dog. And with this corresponds what follows immediately in the next verse, *that their heart was as fat as grease*, which is too common a fault among the despisers of God. For whence comes it that wicked men, whom their own conscience gnaws within them, vaunt themselves so proudly against the best servants of God, but because a certain grossness overgrows their hearts, so that they are stupified in their own wilfulness, or even phrensied. But wonderful, yea, and worthy of highest praise, is the magnanimity of the prophet, all whose delights were treasured up in the law of God, as though he declared that it was this whereon he batten-  
 tened, and this the food with which he refreshed himself even to the full; which could not be the case unless his heart was freed from all unhallowed endearments, and thoroughly cleansed.

71 *It is good for me, &c.*] He confirms the saying we

had before; namely, that his being subdued by God's chastisements was to his profit, that he might be softened to obedience. By which words he confesses that he was not clear from the depraved stubbornness wherewith all mankind is attainted. Otherwise this profit that he speaks of, namely, that his being brought low was the only cause that he became teachable, were but feigned; even as none of us also willingly submits his neck to God, until he soften our hardness with a hammer. And it is good for us to taste continually of this fruit that comes to us by God's chastisements, that they may become sweet to us; and so we may suffer ourselves to be brought to order, who otherwise are so unruly and wayward. The last verse also needs no exposition, because it contains a sentence that occurs very often in this Psalm, and plain enough of itself; namely, that he preferred God's law before all the riches of the world, the fond desire whereof so deplorably infatuates most men: nor does he balance the law of God with his gifts of fortune, but avouches that it is dearer to him than countless riches.

73 Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: make me to understand, and I will learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee shall see me and be glad; because I have waited at thy word.

75 I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are justice: and thou hast humbled me in truth.

76 I beseech thee let thy goodness be to comfort me, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy mercies come unto me, and let me live: for thy law is my delight.

78 Let the proud be put to shame, because they have falsely tripped up my heels: I will muse upon thy precepts.

79 Let such as fear thee turn unto me, and they that know thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not put to shame.

73 *Thy hands, &c.*] That the prophet avouches himself to have been made by God's hand, furthers greatly his hope of obtaining the grace that he sues for. For seeing that we

are formed and fashioned by God, and that he hath not only bestowed vital motion upon us as he hath upon brute beasts, but also hath added thereunto the light of intellect and reason, we may hence gather boldness to pray to him to direct us to the obedience of his law. And yet he calls not upon God as one that were bound to him; but as God forsaketh not the work that he hath begun, the prophet does but call upon him for new grace to go through with what he has taken in hand. For even therefore have we need of the help of the law; because the whole soundness of our heart is corrupted, so that we cannot perceive what is right, except we are taught from some other source. But hereby also appears our blindness and dulness the greater, that teaching avails us nothing until God form our souls anew. And you must bear in mind what I have told you before, that as often as he requests to have understanding given him to learn God's precepts, he condemns himself and all other men of blindness; whereof the only remedy is, to be enlightened by the Holy Ghost.

74 *They that fear thee, &c.*] Either this verse is a continuation of the last, or else it has a larger scope, and is extended to any other of God's benefits. Now, whether he touch but some one particular, or speak generally, he by this condemnation advances highly the benefits wherewith God had adorned him, that the joy thereof may come to all the worshippers of God universally. For he makes it not the only cause of his gladness that he had trusted in the Lord, but also that he had reaped great reward of his hope by being singularly preserved, and loaded with many benefits at his hand. And as God allureth all his servants in general to trust in him, as often as he putteth forth a specimen of his grace towards any one of them, he testifieth to all that he is true in his promises, and that there is no reason why they should be afraid that he would disappoint those who trust in him.

75 *I know, O Lord, &c.*] Though by *judgments* in this Psalm are meant the precepts of the law, yet, as soon after the prophet adds that he was justly chastised, he seems to take this word for the punishments by which God importuneth men to amendment. For the two words צדק and מוֹנֶה are nearly synonymous in this place. Therefore, in the former part, the prophet confesses generally, that God so tempereth his judgments, that he stoppeth the mouths of the wicked, if any of them complain of his cruelty or rigour; and that so much equity shines forth in them, that we are compelled to confess that nothing is better for men, than to be



so called back to themselves. Afterwards he sets down an example in his own person. For even the hypocrites sometimes yield God the praise of justice, when he chastiseth others, and they never find fault with his rigour, so long as he spareth themselves. But it is a mark of true godliness, to be austere and strict censors not so much in others' faults as in our own. And the *knowledge* whereof the prophet makes mention, is a record of earnest examination. For except he had well weighed his own guilt, he could not in his affections have taken hold of God's justice by assured experience. If any one prefer to take the word *judgments* in its usual acceptation, the meaning of the text will be this: Lord, I know that thy law is holy and just, and I have not forgotten to believe so still, because thou hast laid thy hand sore upon me; for even in this also do I discern the justice which is answerable to the nature of thy word.

76 *I beseech thee, &c.*] Although he have acknowledged himself justly humbled, yet he desires to have his sorrow relieved by some comfort. For he calls upon God's mercy as the necessary remedy of his miseries. And thus he shews that nothing can wipe away sorrow from the faithful, until they feel that God is at one with them. Moreover, seeing that God offereth his mercy in his word, therein is conveyed no small comfort to heal all griefs. But now he is speaking of mercy that is actual, if I may so term it, when God by the very deed itself declareth the favour that he hath promised. For the prophet, upon trust of God's promise, already fostered gladness in his heart through hope of grace. But as our hope would be mere disappointment, if God should not at length shew himself our deliverer, he requires to have performed what God had promised him; as if he should say, Lord, seeing thou of thy goodness hast promised to be ready to help me, now make good thy word by effect. Further, it is to be remembered that, as I have said before, it is not in vain to charge God with his promise. For it were presumptuous for men to press into God's presence, if he himself did not open the way for them of his own accord. When he says, *unto thy servant*, he claims not God's mercy to himself alone, as though it had been promised to him by some special oracle; but what God hath promised to the whole church, he, according to the nature of faith, applies to himself. For except I believe myself to be one of the number of them that God speaketh to, so that his promises may belong to me also, I shall never lift up my heart to call upon him. In the next verse he repeats and confirms much the same desire, but in words somewhat altered. For as erewhile he had said that his sorrow could not be taken from him, and gladness restored

him, otherwise than by God's mercy, so now he says he cannot live, unless he be at one with God. And so he distinguishes himself from the worldlings, whom this care does not greatly touch, or rather, who cease not to make a sport of it even when God is displeased with them. For he distinctly affirms, that in living he is but a dead man, till he may know that God is at one with him; and again, that as soon as God's mercy shines upon him he shall be restored from death to life. By the way, he intimates that he was bereft of the tokens of God's fatherly favour for a time. For in vain should he wish to have it come, if it were not away from him. Moreover, to obtain what he prays for, he says that *God's law is his delight*: for else he could not hope that God would be merciful to him. Besides this, no man feels thoroughly what God's favour is worth, save he who, grounding the sum of his felicity in that alone, doubts not that all such as dissever themselves from him, are miserable and accursed; a point the prophet had learned out of the law.

78 *Let the proud, &c.*] We have already often seen the future tense taken in the mood of wishing, among the Hebrews: it would not, however, be inapplicable to make this sense of it; Forasmuch as the proud have dealt frowardly with me, and troubled me without a cause, the Lord will pay them their hire. Still, as it is agreed upon among almost all interpreters, to be a prayer, I, in my translation, meant not to depart from the common consent, especially as the words are directed to God himself. And the reason is to be marked wherefore he hopes that God will be an enemy to his enemies, namely, because they assaulted him wickedly and maliciously. Some translate קָשׁ, *without cause*; but they seem to hit but the one half of the matter: for, in my judgment, this word is referred to the wiles and crafts wherewith the wicked went about to destroy David. Whence we gather, that we are invited directly to God's protection, whenever persecuted wrongfully; and therewith are taught, that there is no cause why their insolence should abash us, because how much soever they take upon themselves, yet shall the Lord beat down their loftiness, and lay it low to their shame, so that their confusion may be an example to others, that nothing is more fond than to sing triumph before the victory. In the second member, the word יִשְׁאָל may as properly be translated *I will speak of*, as *I will muse upon*; as if the prophet should say, that as soon as he had gotten the victory, he would herald the grace of God. For *to speak* or *talk of God's statutes*, imports as much as to declare out of the law, how faithful a keeper, how certain a deliverer, and how just an

avenger of his servants God is. The next verse also connects itself with this, where he says that the deliverance which he shall have obtained, shall become a common instruction to all the godly; as if he should say, My estate might for a time have discouraged the godly, as well as it increased the fierceness of the wicked, but now they shall take heart, and turn their eyes to a joyful spectacle. Moreover, by the two marks wherewith he points out the faithful, we learn what is the nature of true godliness. He places the fear or awe of God in the foreground, and presently he joins to it the knowledge of the heavenly doctrine, that we may know that they are closely connected. For though the superstitious pretend some fear of God, yet is it but an unsubstantial show. Again, they that weary themselves in their own inventions, do but lose their labour, because God will take no account of any other services than such as are performed by his commandment. Therefore the true religion and worship of God spring from faith, so that no man can serve God aright, that is not taught in God's school.

80 *Let my heart be, &c.*] As, a little before, he had wished to have a sound mind given him, so now he makes the same petition for unfeigned affection of heart. We know that these two are the chief powers of man's soul, and whosoever desires to have his understanding enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and his heart framed to the obedience of the law, betrays evidently, that both of them are corrupted and perverted. Whereby is plainly disproved whatsoever the papists babble of free-will. For the prophet not only prayed here to be helped by God because his will is weak, but he declares in the fullest extent that uprightness of the heart is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore according as each man has profited in the knowledge of God's word, let him exercise himself in this other prayer. We are taught further by these words, which is the true keeping of the law. For the greater part of the world think they want nothing when they have once formally framed their life to God's law, by their outward service. But the Spirit of God avoucheth here that no service pleases God, save that which proceeds from soundness of heart. Of the word **לֵב טָהוֹר** we have spoken elsewhere, namely, that a **לֵב טָהוֹר**, that is, *sound heart*, is set against a double, or hollow heart; as if the prophet should say, that they yield themselves truly to God, who, being void of dissimulation, offer him a pure heart. When he adds, *that I be not put to shame*, he intimates, that such is the end of all the proud, who, disdaining his grace, lean on their own strength; and of hypocrites, that parade themselves in gay colours for a time. The meaning then is this, that unless

God by his Spirit rule us and hold us in awe, so that our heart may be pure in his statutes, although our shame be hid for a time, yea, and all men praise us and have us in admiration, yet shame and reproach are coming upon us.

81 My soul hath fainted for thy help ; *yet do* I wait at thy word.

82 Mine eyes are waxed dim *with looking* for thy promise, saying, When wilt thou comfort me ?

83 For I have been as a bottle in the smoke ; *yet* have I not forgotten thy statutes.

84 How many are the days of thy servant ? When wilt thou execute judgment on my persecutors ?

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which thing is not according to thy law.

86 All thy commandments are truth : they persecute me deceitfully ; help me.

87 They have almost consumed me upon earth : yet have I not forsaken thy statutes.

88 Quicken me according to thy goodness ; and I will keep the testimony of thy mouth.

81 *My soul hath, &c.,*] The prophet means that though he were worn out with continual languishing, and saw no end of his miseries, yet no trouble nor weariness could so discourage him, as not always to depend upon God. And that this may be made more evident, we must begin at the second member, which appears to be added in way of exposition. For there he asserts that he trusts in God, which is the groundwork : but wishing to express the unwearied constancy of his faith, he adds that he had gulped down all the distresses which others succumb to. For we see some catch hold of God's promises greedily enough, whose heat soon after vanishes away, or at least is quenched by adversities. The word כלה, indeed, which signifies *to faint* or *be consumed*, seems to convey another thing at the first blush. But the prophet in this place, as in others, by fainting means endurance, which forsakes not those that are as good as dead, even when they are void of all strength, but inspires their hearts with secret and indescribable sighs. This fainting, therefore, is matched against those tender persons that cannot away with long tarriance. The next verse is like this, inasmuch as he transfers that to the eyes, which he had spoken before of the soul. The only difference is this, that instead of longing

after help, now he puts *longing after his promise or word*: for help is in act, as they term it, whereas promise keeps us suspended in expectation. But although God do not at once perform openly that which he promiseth, yet as he offereth not help elsewhere than in his word, there is also no other way of hope than by leaning on his word. Inasmuch, then, as the word goes, in order, before help, or rather, is the mirror wherein it is represented to us; the prophet says, with reason, that while sighing for salvation, he kept his eyes fixed on the word, until his sight failed him. And herein appears the wonderful and incredible force of patience in the infirmity of the flesh, when being faint and destitute of all courage, we seek still to God for help which is not seen. Finally, the prophet gives us to understand how he fainted not without a cause, lest some might think he was over tender and inconstant. For by demanding of God *how long it would be ere he comforted him*, he shews plain enough that he was a long while, as it were, cast off and forsaken.

83 *For I have been, &c.*] The particle 'ו might also, not improperly, be turned into the adverb of time *when*, so that we might read it in one strain thus; *that when the prophet was become like a dried bottle, yet forgat he not God's law*. His purpose, indeed, is not obscure; namely, that although he were proved with sore trial, and wounded to the quick, yet had he not shrunk away from the fear of God. And the likening of himself to a bottle or a bladder, tends to this point, that he was as it were parched with continual heat of adversities. Whereby we gather that it was no mean sorrow that brought him to such wretchedness and leanness that he was almost withered up: though there seems to be conveyed an intimation of a torment that was not only sore, but also lingering; as the smoke that comes from heat dries bladders by little and little. We may perceive, therefore, that there was a long series of griefs, which might have consumed the prophet a hundred times, were it only the daily continuance, if he had not been supported by the word of God. And this, after all, is the true proof of godliness, when we cease not to submit ourselves to God, though in the depth of affliction.

84 *How many are the days, &c.*] Some read these two members apart, as though there were first a general complaint of the shortness of man's life, such as are to be met with in the Psalms, and are very frequent in the book of Job; and afterwards, according to them, there follows a special prayer that God should take vengeance of his enemies. But I had rather combine them, and restrain them both to David's afflictions; as if he had said, Lord, how long art

thou disposed to abandon thy servant to the lust of the ungodly; and when wilt thou set thyself as an avenger against their cruelty and outrage? For the scripture takes the name of *days* often in this sense; as for example, *the days of Egypt*, Ezek. xxx. 9; *the days of Babylon*, and *the days of Jerusalem*, Ps. cxxxvii. 7; which in other places is called *the time of visitation*, Is. x. 3. And by the plural number he denotes a certain and fore-appointed time, which in other places he compares to *the days of an hireling*, Job xiv. 6, and Isaiah xvi. 14. Therefore he does not generally bewail the transitory life of man, but he complains of his own warfare, which in his own opinion he had endured over-long, and therefore not without cause longs to have it ended. And though he debate with God on his trouble, yet does he not do so stubbornly or with a feeling of discontent; but in demanding how long he must be fain to forbear, he modestly beseeches God that he would not withhold his helping hand long. And whereas by his prayer he stirs him up to vengeance, we have seen heretofore in what sort it was lawful for him to make such request; namely, that he desired such manner of revenging as suits properly with God. For certain it is, that he had laid aside all the corrupt affections of the flesh, that he might with pure and undisturbed zeal desire God's judgment. And yet in this place he wishes generally that God should put to his hand, and deliver him from wrong: but he does not doom his adversaries to damnation; for it suffices him, provided God shew himself an avenger.

85 *The proud have, &c.*] He makes his moan that he was entrapped by the crafts and wiles of his enemies, as if he should say they had not only sought his destruction by open force and the sword, but also maliciously practised how to destroy him by treason or privy policies. What he adds, *that it was not according to God's law*, is to provoke him to mercy, because God is so much the readier to help his servants, when he sees that together with their welfare his own law also is impeached. Meanwhile, he gives a proof of his own innocence, that he had deserved no such thing at their hands, and that whatsoever they practised, he notwithstanding bridled himself patiently; for he would not have attempted what he knew to be against God's law. In the next verse he confirms, again, that howsoever he was troubled, yet he had not been distracted by various imaginings, because he had such trust in God's word that he doubted not of his help. And first of all, he declares with what shield he was fenced to receive all blows; namely, with this, that the faithful war a prosperous warfare under God's



standard, because the welfare which they hope for by his promise is not uncertain. On this consideration he avouches God's commands to be true. By which encomium he means that those who trust in God's promise are out of danger, so that this buttress may hold us up with hearts undepressed. Secondly, he complains of the treachery of his enemies, as he explained before. For here is repeated the word שָׁקֵר, whereby he means that they had no regard of equity. Hence also he conceives hope of deliverance, because it is God's peculiar office to succour the poor that are wrongfully oppressed.

87 *They have almost, &c.*] In somewhat other words he repeats what he had spoken awhile ago, that although he had been sore tempted, yet he had kept himself upon his feet, verily because he forsook not godliness. Now, although it were enough to have declared this once for all to such as are perfect, yet if we call to mind our own weakness, we shall confess that it is no superfluous doctrine. For it is not the assault of the extremest encounters only that makes us to forget God's law: but the greater part of us shrink away before it comes to blows. Wherefore the more is this wonderful strength of the prophet's to be noted, that being in a manner as good as dead, still he never ceased to revive his courage by continual meditation on the law. And not in vain has he put in, that this was done upon earth: for therein is conveyed a tacit comparison of it with heaven; as if he should say, when the fears of death pressed upon him on all sides on earth, he lifted up his mind on high; for if faith reach up into heaven, it shall be an easy matter to emerge from despair. The last verse also contains no new thing: for in the beginning of it, David places his life in God's mercy, not only because he was conscious of human frailty, but because he saw himself daily abandoned to many deaths, or rather, that he lay for dead, God's power being withdrawn from him. Afterwards, when he shall be restored to life again, he promises to be thankful, and that not only with his tongue, but also with his whole life. For as God's help, by which he delivers us out of dangers, are so many new lives, even so it is reasonable that we should dedicate to him whatever additional time he give us. When the law is called *the testimony of God's mouth*, by this encomium its authority is notably avouched.

89 Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven.

90 Thy truth from generation to generation:

thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth.

91 And thy judgments continue hitherto : for they are all thy servants.

92 Except thy law had been my delight, I had *even* then perished in my trouble.

93 I will never forget thy statutes, because thou hast quickened me in them.

94 I am thine, save me : for I have sought thy statutes.

95 The ungodly wait for me, to destroy me : *but* I consider thy testimonies.

96 In all perfection I have seen an end : *but* thy commandment is very large.

89 *Thy word, O Lord, &c.*] Many expound this verse as though David should allege it as a proof of God's truth, that the state of the heavens is stable and fixed. Therefore, according to them, the meaning is this ; that God is proved to be true, in that the heavens abide eternally the same. Others allege a still more constrained sense ; that God's truth is more certain than the very state of the heavens. But, in my opinion, the prophet meant quite another thing. For as we see nothing steadfast, or of long continuance upon earth, he lifts up our minds to heaven, that they may anchor there. Doubtless, David, as he has done in many other places, could have said that the whole order of the world bears witness to the constancy of God's word ; which is most true. But, as it was to be feared lest the minds of the godly should hang in uncertainty if he should have grounded the proof of God's truth upon the world, where there are manifold disorders ; by placing it in heaven, he gives it a habitation subject to no changes. Therefore, lest any man might esteem God's word according to the view of such various revolutions, the earth is covertly matched against the heaven ; as if it had been said that our salvation, inasmuch as it is enclosed in God's word, is not fickle as all earthly things are, but is stationed in a safe and quiet harbour. The same thing says the prophet Isaiah, in somewhat other words ; *All flesh is hay, and all the glory of the same, as the flower of the field* : Isaiah, xl. 6. For, according to St. Peter's exposition, 1 Peter, i. 24, he means that the certainty of salvation is to be sought in the word ; and therefore that they do amiss who grovel in the world, because the firmness of God's word far transcends the nature

of the world. The same sentence he repeats and confirms in the verse following. For he expressly teaches that though the faithful are harassed as sojourners for a little while upon earth, and soon flee away, yet is not their life in anywise subject to decay, because they are begotten again of incorruptible seed. Nevertheless, the prophet proceeds yet further; for, as before, he bade us pierce into heaven by faith, because we shall find nothing in the world to rest safely upon, so now again he teaches, by experience, that though the world be subject to revolutions, yet the truth of God shines forth with evident and notable testimonies of him, even in that behalf also, so that the steadfastness of his word is not confined to heaven only, but comes down even to us also. The continuance of the earth in the same steadfastness that God set it in at the first foundation, is added with the same view as if he should say, Lord, the truth of thy word is visible to us even in the very earth, as it were in a mirror, because, though it be suspended in the midst of the sea, yet it keepeth still its state. These two things, therefore, are perfectly compatible; that the steadfastness of God's word is not to be esteemed according to the state of the world, which fluctuates from time to time, and fades away as a shadow; and yet also that men are unthankful, if they do not partly acknowledge the aforesaid sentence in the workmanship of the world, because the earth, which else could not stand one moment, does notwithstanding abide steadfast, because it is founded upon the word of God. Furthermore, there is no cause why any man should object that it is a hard thing to seek God's truthfulness out of the world, because it is too remote from the reach of man's understanding. For the prophet meets them, saying that though it dwell in heaven, yet there are evident signs of it to be seen before our feet, which may by little and little advance us to the perfect knowledge of it, as far as our small capacity and simplicity will permit. And so the prophet, on the one hand, exhorts us to mount above the whole world by faith, that the word of God may have his full steadfastness to stay up our faith, and, on the other hand, warns us that we are in no wise excusable, if we find not out God's truth even by the aspect of the earth, since it extends itself even to our feet. In the first member, men are called back from the vanity of their own reason; and, in the other, their weakness is relieved, that they may have a foretaste upon the earth of what is to be sought for more fully in heaven.

91 *And thy judgments, &c.*] The word *היום*, which, following other interpreters, I have translated *hitherto*, might not unfitly be translated *daily*, or *every day*, and yet the

meaning would differ nothing. For the prophet means that the whole order of nature leans upon the commandment or decree of God alone. For in terming them *judgments*, he alludes to the law itself; as if he should say that the same rightfulness which is disclosed in God's law shines forth everywhere. Whence it follows that men are too froward, when through their own unbelief, as much as in them lies, they shake and impair God's faithfulness, whereupon all creatures lean; and consequently, when through their own stubbornness, they impeach God's righteousness, and deny the authority of his commands, whereupon the stableness of the whole world is grounded. And although it be a hard manner of speech to say that all the elements are God's servants, yet expresses it more than if he had said that all things are ordered to do service to God. For how should the air, which is so thin, not consume itself with blowing continually? how should the waters not waste away with flowing, if they hearkened not to God's secret commandment? By faith, indeed, we perceive that the world stands by God's commandment: but all who are endued with one drop of understanding, gather the same from evident proofs. Therefore let this be thoroughly rooted in us, that all things are so cherished by God's secret operation, that they obey God's word or commandment in preserving their estate. For we must always bear in mind the mark the prophet aims at; namely, that God's truth, which shines forth in his outward works, leads us higher and higher by steps, that the truth of the heavenly doctrine may be out of all doubt.

92 *Except thy law, &c.*] The prophet continues still almost the same doctrine. For he says he had been undone if he had not sought comfort of his miseries out of God's law. The adverb *IN* signifies *then*: but as sometimes it is understood of a *long while*, it imports as much here as *long ago*; except any one like better that it should be an emphatic pointing to the thing, as though still he were actually engaged in what he describes. And he confirms the thing that he had spoken before by his own experience, so that it may appear that he speaks not of things unknown to him, but that he avouches the thing which he has learned in very deed, and by experience itself, namely, that there is no other comfort and remedy of adversities but to acquiesce in God's word, and to embrace the grace and the assurance of our salvation, which are offered us there. And certain it is that here is commended the self-same word which he said, even now, dwelt in heaven. For though it give a sound upon earth, and enter into our ears, and settle in our

hearts, yet does it keep still its heavenly nature, because it comes down to us in such a manner that it is not subject to worldly changes. And the prophet declares that he was overcharged with a weight of afflictions which was able to overwhelm him, and that the consolation he derived from the law in that state of utter despair was as life to him. The next verse contains a thanksgiving. For as the law of the Lord had preserved him, he promises that he will never be unmindful of it. Notwithstanding, therewithal he shews how needful it is to remember God's law, because though we have found by experience that it gives life, yet does forgetfulness of it easily creep upon us, for which we are justly punished when God suffereth us to pine away in our heaviness.

94 *I am thine, &c.*] First he takes courage to pray in this respect, that he is one of God's own stamp or coinage, as they term it. And secondly, he proves by the event that he is of God, because he keeps his commandments. Nevertheless, this must not be so taken as though he boasted of any desert of his own, as the custom is to allege this for a reason to obtain what we desire; I have always loved you, I have always sought to prefer your honour and profit, my service has always been ready at your commandment. But rather David alleges the mere grace of God. For no man by his own industry acquires so great honour as to be of God's retinue, but it proceeds from his free adoption. God, therefore, is charged here with his own benefit, that he should not leave the work that he had begun. For when he says he bent himself earnestly to God's commandments, that also depends upon his calling, because he began not to apply his mind to God's commandments before he was called, and received into his household. And as he desires the Lord to save him, immediately after he expresses his need, saying that *the ungodly sought for him to destroy him*. And yet he declares therewith the constancy of his godliness, because he then set his mind upon the law of God, which is a thing worthy to be noted. For such as at other times would be forward and willing to follow God, know not whither to turn themselves when they are assailed by the wicked, insomuch that they easily fall into unhallowed plans. Wherefore it is a great virtue, though the wicked conspire our destruction, so that we are in jeopardy of life, as far as flesh can perceive, yet to yield God so much honour as to hold ourselves content with his only promises. And *to consider of God's testimonies* imports as much in this place as to set our minds wholly upon God's word,

which bears us up against all assaults, is effectual to calm all fears, and restrains us from all untoward designs.

96 *In all perfection, &c.*] In other words he commends again what he has taught in the first verse of this letter; that is, that God's word is not subject to changeableness, because it mounts far above the frail elements of the world. For here he says that nothing under heaven is so perfect and sound, or so absolute in all parts, as, for all this, not to have an end; and that the word of God alone, in its amplitude, surpasses all bounds and limits. Because the verb כלה signifies as well *to consume and finish*, as also *to make perfect*, some take the word תכלה for *a measure or end*. But reason requires that it should be translated *perfection*, that the comparison may be the more apparent, and the better amplify the credit of God's word; as if the prophet had said that after he had viewed all things, especially those which excel in most exact perfection, yet were they nothing to God's word, because an end hangs over all other things, but the word of God stands ever firm in its own eternity. Whence it follows, that we need not fear lest it should forsake us in the midst of our race. For hereunto pertains the term *large*, because though a man mount above the heavens, or go down into the lowest depths, or range transverse from right to left, yet shall he not reach further than the truth of God conducts us. It remains that our minds take in this amplitude; which will come to pass when they shall have ceased to hamper themselves in the narrowness of this world.

97 What a love have I had unto thy law! all the day do I busy my mind about it.

98 Thou hast made me wiser than mine adversaries by thy commandments: for they are ever with me.

99 Thou hast made me skilfuller than all my teachers: because I have minded thy testimonies.

100 I understood more than the aged; because I have kept thy statutes.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil path, that I might keep thy word.

102 I have not stepped aside from thy judgments: because thou hast taught me.

103 How sweet are thy sayings to my chaps! *yea*, more *sweet* than honey to my mouth!

104 By thy precepts I have gotten understanding:



and therefore I have hated all the ways of falsehood.

97 *What a love have, &c.*] Not content with a single confirmation, he cries out in a way of question, that he was inflamed with incredible love of the law of God; and for proof thereof he adds that he was continually occupied in meditating thereon. For if any one boast that he loves God's law dearly, and yet neglects the study thereof, and turns his mind to other things, he betrays an hypocrisy inconceivably gross. For the love of it, especially such a love as the prophet mentions here, always engenders a continual minding of it. And truly, except God's law inflame our hearts with the love of it, yea, and ravish them too, many enticements will soon steal upon us, and lead us away to vanity. The prophet, then, commends here such a love of the law, as, possessing all our senses, shuts the gate and bars it against all the deceits and corruptions, whereunto we are otherwise too much given.

98 *Thou hast made me, &c.*] Here the prophet avouches himself to have been better learned than his adversaries, or his schoolmaster, or the age, because he had been a scholar of God's law. Moreover, he means that he was endued with understanding above his enemies otherwise than above his teachers. For he went beyond his enemies, because they availed nothing at all by their crafts and policies, when they bent their wiliness to his destruction. For we know how the maliciousness of the ungodly is always goading them to do mischief: but as they are oftentimes subtle and captious, we are afraid lest our simplicity might be impeached by their deceits, if we encounter them not with like crafts and policies; and therefore the prophet glories, that there was protection enough for him in God's law, for him to escape all snares. Now where he takes upon him to be better learned than his masters, the comparison seems against reason, inasmuch as they also had learned out of God's law what was behoveful to be known. But it is out of doubt that the prophet gives God thanks, for making him to outdo the proficiency of those at whose hands he had received the elements. For it is no new thing for the scholar to excel his master, according as God divides to each man the measure of understanding. For we know that howsoever the faithful are instructed by the pains and labour of men, their enlightening comes of God. And the excellence of the scholar above the master comes from this; God's will is, to shew, as it were with the finger, that he uses men's service in suchwise as that he himself continueth still the chief teacher. Wherefore, let us

learn to commit ourselves to his teaching, that we may glory with David, that by his guiding we have proceeded further than man's instruction could lead us. The same thing also adds he of *the aged men*, for greater confirmation: for age avails men greatly; in so far as they who by nature are dull and rude, are polished by long experience and practice. And the prophet says, that he had gotten more discretion by God's law, than belongs to aged men. The effect is, that whosoever yields himself teachably to God, and keeps his thoughts under the guidance of his word, and occupies himself diligently in thinking upon his law, shall find skill enough there; so that he may protect himself against the trains of his enemies, and be circumspect enough to escape their deceits, and finally be able to match with any of the best masters through the whole course of his life. Yet does not David boast of his wisdom, to set himself off in the face of the world; but, by his own example, he warns us that nothing is better for us than to learn at God's mouth, because they only are perfectly wise, who are taught in his school. Also, here is commended unto the faithful, soberness, that they should not seek for wisdom elsewhere than at God's word, lest ambition or curiosity might seduce them to vain boasting. To be brief, modesty and lowliness are enjoined to all men, that no man should take upon him such knowledge as might raise him up above God's law; but that as soon as that heavenly wisdom comes forth, all men, however intelligent and skilful, should willingly yield themselves in submission to it. When he says that he has observed God's precepts, he intimates what manner a minding it was whereof we have spoken, that we may know that he did not coldly philosophize upon them, but devoted himself with earnest affection to the precepts of God.

101 *I have refrained my, &c.*] He means that he proclaimed war against all vices, that he might yield himself to the service of God. Whence is gathered a profitable doctrine; namely, that to the intent we may keep God's law, first, we must beware that our feet step not aside into crooked by-paths; for considering how corrupt our nature is, what a number of enticements there are, and how fickle our minds are, nothing is more to be apprehended than that we should be seduced into error; nay, it is a rare miracle that any man should keep his right course in this life. The faithful, therefore, have need take singular good heed, if they will keep their feet from wandering. In the next verse David commends his own constancy in endeavouring to keep the law. Therefore he says that ever since he received a rule to live by at God's hand, he had proceeded in the right

way. Now then, seeing that the way is so slippery, our feet so feeble, and our whole disposition so inclinable to innumerable errors, we had need of no small exertion to hold ourselves upright, lest we slip aside from God's judgments. But we must mark what manner of teaching he denotes; for though all men to whom God's word is preached, are taught without exception, yet scarce one in ten takes a taste of it; yea, and scarce one in a hundred profits so much that he can proceed in his right course to the end. Then is there betokened here a peculiar manner of teaching; namely, that God draweth his chosen to him inwardly: as if the prophet should say he was brought into the way of salvation, and retained in the same, by the secret instinct of the Spirit.

. 103 *How sweet, &c.*] He repeats again the same thing that he had spoken in other words; namely, that he was so in love with the sweetness of God's law, that he took none other delight. For it may happen that a man may be brought to stand in some awe of the law; but no one will follow the law cheerfully, save he that has conceived this sweetness. And God requireth not slavish service at our hands; but he will have us to come to him cheerfully, which is the very cause why the prophet commends the sweetness of God's word so often in this Psalm. If any one demand in what sense the prophet says he was so rapturously delighted in God's law, which, by the record of Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 9, does but strike fear into men, the solution is easy; that the prophet speaks not of the dead letter, which kills the readers, but he comprehends the whole doctrine of the law, the chief part whereof is the free covenant of salvation. Paul, contrasting the Law with the Gospel, touches only the commandments with the threatenings. Now, if God should only command and proclaim the curse, doubtless then were all his communication deadly. But the prophet, not opposing the Law to the Gospel, justly avouches that the grace of adoption, which is offered in the law, is sweeter to him than honey; that is to say, that no delight was comparable to it. Now must you keep in mind, that, as I have said heretofore, the law of God is unsavoury to us, or at least is never so sweet that it can call us back from the pleasures of the flesh, until we have wrestled manfully against our own disposition, to subdue the fleshly affections that reign in us.

104 *By thy statutes, &c.*] The prophet seems here to invert the order he had laid down just now: for he said he had held back his feet from straying, that he might keep God's law, and now he institutes a contrary order, making his beginning at the keeping of the law: for he says he was

taught by God's word ere he could amend his faults. These two things, however, are not incompatible with each other; that the faithful should call home their wandering senses in order to frame their life according to the rule of God's word, and also that when they are now advanced on in the way, as the fear of God flourishes in them, they should begin to bear a greater hatred towards all vices, and to abhor them more earnestly. And truly the beginning of a good life is for every man to endeavour to purge himself from vice, and the more any man has profited, to burn with the greater zeal in detesting and shunning vices. Moreover, we are taught by the prophet's words, that the reason why men are so wrapped in leasings, and entangled in wicked errors, is because they draw not true wisdom from God's word. When all the world are given to folly, this is the subterfuge to which the wanderers resort, that it is too difficult a task for them to guard against delusions. But the remedy were near at hand if we would follow the prophet's counsel; that is, if we would not lean on our own wisdom, but seek understanding out of God's word, where he not only shews what is right, but also fenceth us and maketh us wary against all the deceits of Satan, and all the impostures of the world. And would God this were thoroughly impressed on the hearts of those that at this day boast themselves to be faithful, for then the greater part of men would not continually be driven to and fro with such inconstancy, according to the conflicting impulses of opinions. But as for us, since Satan is exerting himself so sedulously to spread abroad the mists of error, let us apply ourselves with greater earnestness to the attainment of this wisdom.

105 Thy word is a lantern to my foot, and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn, and will perform it, to keep the judgments of thy righteousness.

107 I am very sore afflicted; O Lord, quicken me according to thy word.

108 Lord, I beseech thee, let the free offerings of my mouth please thee, and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul is always in mine hand: and I have not forgotten thy law.

110 The ungodly have laid a snare for me; and I have not swerved from thy precepts.

111 I have taken thy testimonies as an heritage for ever: because they are the joy of my heart.

112 I have applied my heart to fulfil thy statutes for ever, to the end.

105 *Thy word is, &c.*] In this verse the prophet testifies that the law of God is his schoolmaster and guide to live well, and by his own example prescribes the same rule to us all; for while each of us follows what seems good to himself, we become involved in horrible mazes. Nevertheless, that we may understand his mind more certainly, it is to be noted that God's word is matched against all worldly devices: for what the world deems right, oftentimes is crooked and untoward before God, who alloweth no other course of living than such as is framed according to the rule of his law. Nor, indeed, could David have been guided by God's word, unless he had first renounced the wisdom of the flesh, according also as the same is the beginning of our teachableness. But the metaphor which he uses, unfolds the thing somewhat more; namely, that unless God's word illumine the way, the whole life of men is wrapped in darkness and mist, so that they cannot but miserably stray; and also that when we submit ourselves to God's law, willing to be taught, we are out of danger of straying: for were there such darkness in God's word as the papists prattle of, it would be but a false and counterfeit commendation which the prophet decks it with. Let us, then, assure ourselves that perfect light is shewn us there, provided we open our eyes. The same sentence has Peter expressed more plainly, 2 Pet. i. 19, praising the faithful for giving heed to the word of prophecy, *as to a lamp shining in a dark place*. Again, he speaks of his own constancy; and as a little before he said that he stepped not aside from God's law in all his life, so now he treats of the purpose of his mind. By the word *swear*, he intimates that he had bound himself solemnly to God, not to alter his determination. For the true manner of keeping God's law, is to undertake and to embrace what he commandeth, and that uniformly, so that our ardour abate not presently, as is often wont to come to pass. The same is also the proper rule of vowing, even to offer ourselves to God, and to dedicate our life to him. It may, however, be demanded, whether the prophet's oath be not to be condemned as rash, in that he has presumed to take much more upon him than man's ability admits: for who will be able to keep the law? Rashly, therefore, does he now step forth to make a vow, in promising to God a thing that is impossible. But the answer is easy, that as often as the faithful vow anything to God, they look not what they are able to do of themselves, but they lean upon God's grace, to whom it be-

longeth to perform the thing that he requireth at our hands; namely, by supplying them with strength from his Spirit. Furthermore, without the Spirit they cannot vow anything, where service is to be rendered to God: for as Paul says, 2 Cor. iii. 5, *we are not able so much as to think a good thought*. But forasmuch as God, stretching out his hand to us, biddeth us be of good cheer and comfort, and assureth us that he will never fail us; hence comes this boldness to swear. Nor, indeed, is it any rashness at all, when, upon trust of God's promises, wherewith he preventeth us, we, on the other side, offer ourselves to his service. Yet the question is not resolved, because howsoever the children of God come out victorious over all temptations by the grace of the Holy Ghost, yet they always labour under some infirmity. But it is to be noted, that in the vows and promises of the faithful, not only the covenant whereby God promiseth that he will make us to walk in his precepts, Ezek. xi. 20, but also the other that is added thereto, concerning free forgiveness, is taken into the account. David, therefore, according to the measure of grace that was given him, bound himself by oath to keep the law, according to this saying of the prophet, Ps. ciii. 13, *I will spare them, as a father is wont to spare his children that serve him*.

107 *I am very sore, &c.*] This verse shews that God cherished not the fathers under the law so tenderly in his bosom, but that he exercised them with hard temptations; for he says not that he was afflicted lightly, or after an ordinary manner, but above measure; and in requiring to be quickened, he intimates that he was at the point to die. Notwithstanding, he shews therewith that though he were sore pressed by death, yet he fainted not, because he leaned upon God: a point to be marked advisedly; for though our alacrity in calling upon God may hold out at the first, yet if the temptation grows severer, our hearts quail; yea, and in extremity of fear our boldness is annihilated. But the prophet cries to God for grace, not whereby to be preserved safe in life, but whereby to recover life lost. Also we must mark well this part, *according to thy word*. For our praying will be cold, or rather none at all, if God's promise give us not courage in sorrow and distress. Finally, as we have said heretofore, no entrance at all to praying will be open to us except this key be at hand.

108 *Lord, I beseech thee, &c.*] This verse may as well be read in one strain, as divided into two members. According to the former way, the sense would be this: Receive my sacrifices to this end, that thou mayest teach me thy precepts. If the distinction be preferred, there will be



two separate prayers: first, that God should accept the prophet's sacrifices; and secondly, that he should instruct him in the doctrine of the law. I incline rather to the first opinion, for, as we have seen heretofore, the prophet avouches that nothing is more precious to him than to understand the doctrine of the law; as if he should say, Lord, of thy goodwill accept the sacrifices I offer; and forasmuch as the consummation of all my desires is to be instructed aright in thy law, grant me my request in this good thing which I long for. And the common places are to be marked, where the knowledge of the heavenly doctrine is preferred before all other benefits of the world. And doubtless, seeing it contains in it the pledge of everlasting salvation, there is good cause why it should be esteemed as an incomparable treasure. Nevertheless, the prophet begins at a higher point; that is, that God would vouchsafe to allow and accept his service. I doubt not but that by the word נדבות he denotes the sacrifices which were called *freewill offerings*. I confess, indeed, that he speaks properly of vows and prayers. But as they were wont to offer sacrifices to propitiate God according to every man's ability, he alludes to that custom of the law, like as Hosea, xiv. 2, calls the praises of God *the calves of the lips*. For it was God's will to assure the fathers by that ceremony, that no prayers pleased him except they were joined with sacrifice, that they should always turn their minds to the Mediator. In the first place, he acknowledges himself unworthy to obtain aught by his prayers, unless God will hear him freely. And secondly, he wishes to have God favourable to him in this, that he may profit aright in the doctrine of the law. For the word רצון, which he uses, signifies *to favour of mere goodwill*. Whence it follows that there is no desert in our prayers, but that as often as God granteth them, he doeth it in his bounty.

109 *My soul is always, &c.*] He declares that no miseries, afflictions, or dangers, withdrew him from serving God and keeping his law. For *to bear the soul in the hand* imports as much as to be in jeopardy of life, so as the soul should be as it were abandoned to the wind; according as Job, xiii. 14, when he pines in miseries, looking for death every moment, and dreading it, complains that his soul is in his hand; as if he should say it was plucked out of its own dwelling-place, and lay at the command of death. Sadly, therefore, is this manner of speaking wrested to an untoward sense by the unlearned; as if the prophet should say it were in his own power to govern his life as he listed. Nay rather, by this circumstance he sets forth his own

godliness, that although he were tossed among shipwrecks, and a hundred deaths hovered before his eyes, so that he could not be in quiet rest one minute, yet he gave not over the study of God's law. Here, again, it is to be noted with what hard encounters the fathers were tried under the law, lest dangers and dreads might scare us away, or weaken us by a feeling of weariness, so that the remembrance of God's law should not maintain its place in our hearts. The meaning of the next verse is akin to this: for the prophet points out more definitely how he carried his life in his hand; that is, that being hemmed in on all sides with the treacheries of wicked men, he saw scarcely any hope of life. We have told you heretofore how hard a matter it is not to stray from the ways of the Lord, when our enemies practise our destruction by their snares. For both the lust of the flesh incites us to retaliate, neither appears there any means to save our life, unless we encounter them with the same arts that they assault us with, and we imagine it lawful for us to howl among wolves. Wherefore, the more must we be mindful of this doctrine, namely, that when the wicked beset us about, there is nothing better than to follow whithersoever God calleth us, and to attempt nothing but by his warrant.

111 *I have taken thy, &c.*] He confirms again that sentence which cannot be repeated too often; namely, that he made more account of God's law than of all the pleasures, riches, and wealth of the world. I have told you that it is not for nought that this is inculcated so often; for we see with what violence the lusts of the world vent themselves, and with what manifold anxieties individuals are agitated while they cease not to covet innumerable things; and in the mean time scarce one in a hundred aspires in a moderate degree to the study of God's law. The prophet, then, that he may spur us up by his own example, says that he has such a pleasure in God's testimonies, that he esteems nothing more precious. For it is only love that wins esteem for things. Therefore, that we may observe God's law with such reverence as becomes us, it is requisite for us to begin with this taking delight in it. And it is no marvel though God's testimonies bring such joy as may make us reject and despise all other things, and hold us fast bound to them. For what can be sweeter than to have heaven opened to us, so that we may press freely into God's presence, he adopting us to be his children, and freely pardoning our sins? What can be more desirable than to hear that he is so pacified towards us, that he taketh upon him the care of our life? This I thought good to observe briefly, lest we

might think it strange that David's heart should take so great pleasure in God's law. The similitude of *heritage* is often met with in the scripture; and that is called our inheritance which we make chief account of, so that we are ready to forego all other things, provided that one thing may remain safe. Therefore the prophet means that what goods soever he had gotten he accounted as unessential, and that the heavenly doctrine only was as his heritage, because without that he esteemed all things else as nothing; insomuch that he could well find in his heart to leave riches, honours, comforts, and pleasures to others, provided he might possess this incomparable treasure. Not that he altogether despised God's benefits, which pertain to the behoof of this present life, but because his mind was not tied to them.

112 *I have inclined, &c.*] In this verse he describes the honest observance of the law; that is to say, when we buckle ourselves cheerfully and heartily to the performing of that which the law commands. For slavish and constrained obedience differs little from rebelliousness. Therefore the prophet, that he may briefly define what it is to serve God, says not that he inclined his hands, eyes, or feet only, to the keeping of the law, but that he began with the affection of the heart. Though instead of the word *incline* it would not be unsuitable to put the word *extend*: but I hold to the most received sense; that is, that he came with a forward desirousness to the keeping of the law. Nevertheless, this inclining or applying of the heart is matched against the wandering lusts that rise up against God, and hale us anywhere, rather than incline us to doing well. And when the papists arm themselves with this sword for the proof of freewill, it is mere trifling. They gather from the prophet's words that it is in man's power to turn his heart whithersoever he lists. But the solution is easy; that the prophet boasts not here what he had done of his own strength: for he repeats now the same word he had set down before, when he said, *Incline my heart to thy testimonies, &c.* If this was not a counterfeit prayer, doubtless he has acknowledged that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost to incline and frame our hearts to good. But it is no new thing to have that ascribed to us which God worketh in us. This saying of St. Paul's, Phil. ii. 3, is clear that it is God which worketh the will in us. But when the prophet says he inclined his heart, he separates not his own endeavour from the grace of the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration he has heretofore avouched that all is done, At the same time also he distinguishes the constancy

of his own godly affection from the transient fervour of others; and therefore he says he had thought upon the whole course of his life, lest he might faint by the way, or even retrograde. In my judgment the word עקב is added to the word לעולם in way of exposition; and that, that we might know that he wrestled stoutly against all obstacles and difficulties, that they might not quail his constancy. For there is not a man that continues in the pure serving of God without arduous exertions. Others take it for a *reward* or *wages*, but it seems too remote from the matter.

113 I have hated crooked thoughts, and loved thy law.

114 Thou art my refuge and my shield: I have trusted in thy word.

115 Away from me, ye wicked: and I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 Uphold me in thy word, and I shall live: and make me not ashamed of my waiting.

117 Establish me, and I shall be safe: and I will think upon thy statutes continually.

118 Thou hast trodden down all those that stray from thy statutes; for their guile is but a leasing.

119 Thou hast made all the ungodly of the earth to cease as dross: therefore have I loved thy testimonies.

120 My flesh trembled for fear of thee, and I was afraid of thy judgments.

113 *I have hated, &c.*] They that will have the word עפ"י to be a noun appellative, translate it, *them that think evil*; but it is taken more correctly for the very thoughts, and this is most usually admitted. ע"י properly signifies a *bough* or a *branch*: but metaphorically it is applied to thoughts, which, growing out of the heart, as boughs out of the body of a tree, spread themselves every way. And as it is quite certain that they are taken here in a bad sense, I have added the epithet *crooked*, which the etymology of the word requires: for as the boughs of a tree shoot out transversely, entangled and intertwined, even so are thoughts confusedly mingled together, turning and twisting about in all directions. For whereas some Hebrews understand it of the laws of the heathen, which are cut off as boughs or branches of God's law, it is ingenious, but unsupported. I therefore hold still

to that which is more simple; namely, that the crooked inventions of man's heart, and whatsoever the ungodly devise through perverseness of the understanding, is matched against God's law, which alone is right. And certainly, whosoever will embrace God's law rightly, must, of necessity, first wean himself from wicked and sinful thoughts, or rather, depart from his own disposition. Except, perhaps, another metaphor is preferred; that **לְעַלּוֹת** should signify *high thoughts*, because the verb **עָלָה** is taken for *to lift up*. And we know that there is no sacrifice more acceptable to God than obedience, when we are not high-minded in ourselves, and our teachableness is founded on humility. Yet as this exposition also may seem somewhat far-fetched, I pass it over. Let that which I have said suffice; namely, that as God admitteth none to be disciples of his law, but such as are free and well cleansed from all devices opposed to it, that corrupt the mind, the prophet here avouches himself to be a foe to all crooked thoughts that are wont to draw men hither and thither.

114 *Thou art my, &c.*] The meaning is, that as the prophet was persuaded that he could not otherwise be safe than so far as he lay hid under God's wing, upon trust of his promises he was afraid of nothing. And surely, the first point is, that the faithful should resolve that their life continues not in safety among so many hazards, otherwise than by the defence of God, that they may thereupon flee to him, and, leaning on his word, calmly wait for the salvation he hath promised. True it is, indeed, that this confidence that God is our refuge and shield, is conceived from God's word; but we must take this mutual relation with it, that when we have learned by the word that our safe refuge is in God, this doctrine is cherished and confirmed in our minds, when we feel how needful this defence of God is for us. Nevertheless, though his might ought to suffice us abundantly to make us hope for help at his hand, yet we ought always to set the word before us, lest our faith quail if his help be long in coming.

115 *Away from me, &c.*] Many expound this verse as if David promised to give himself to the keeping of the law more cheerfully and earnestly, when the wicked shall have left assaulting him. And truly, when we feel that God is our deliverer, we are more than blockish if this experience stir not up an earnestness in us to do him service. For unless godliness increase in us according to our feeling and proof of God's grace, we betray a shameful thanklessness. The said doctrine, therefore, is true and profitable; but the prophet had another meaning in this place. For as he saw what a

hindrance the ungodly are to us, he banishes them far from him; or rather, he testifies that he will beware that he entangle not himself with their company. Neither has he spoken this so much for his own sake, as to teach us, by his example, that if we mind to proceed in the way of the Lord without stumbling, we must endeavour above all things to be as far as may be from worldlings and wicked persons, not by distance of place, but in intercourse and conversation. For it is scarcely possible but they must corrupt us forthwith by their contact, if they creep into our acquaintance. In a word, it is too well seen how fatal the fellowship of the wicked is; and hence it comes to pass, that few continue sound to the end, because the world is fraught with corruptions. And in such weakness of our nature, nothing is more natural than to be infected, and to contract pollution from the least touch. Justly, therefore, does the prophet bid the wicked get them away from him, that he may proceed in the fear of God without hindrance. For whosoever shall have hampered himself with their company, shall in process of time bring himself at last to that point, that he shall abandon himself to contempt of God and a dissolute life, as they do. And with this saying agrees Paul's admonishment, 2 Cor. vi. 14, *that we should not draw the yoke with the unbelievers*. Now although it were not in the prophet's power to chase the wicked far away from him, yet he means by these words, that he will have no conversation with them hereafter. Emphatically also does he name him *his God*, that he may witness that he makes more account of him alone, than of all the men in the world. For as he saw a sink of wickedness prevailing everywhere upon earth, he separated himself from men, that he might give himself wholly to God. And at this day, lest evil examples carry us away, it concerns us greatly to set God on our side, and to abide in him steadfastly, because he is ours.

116 *Uphold me in thy word.*] Many read it, *according to thy word*, so that the letter  $\beth$  should be taken instead of  $\daleth$ , the mark of similitude; and so the meaning would be, Uphold me according to thy promise that thou hast made, or, according as thou hast promised me. And surely, as often as God stretcheth out his hand to us to raise us up when we are fallen, or supporteth us with his hand, he fulfilleth his promises. Nevertheless, the prophet seems to crave constancy of faith, that he may abide steadfast in his word. For as we are said to fall from God's word by departing from his protection, so, as long as we lean upon his promise, he is our upholder. But because, as the prophet knew there was not so much fortitude in man, he craves perseverance at God's



hand as the singular gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, neither is there true stability to be found elsewhere than in God's word, neither can any man lean steadfastly on the same, save he that is strengthened by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we must always beseech God to hold us in faith, who alone is the author and finisher of faith. Moreover, by placing life in faith, he shews it to be but a mere falsehood whatsoever men promise themselves without the word. The Lord alone, therefore, quickeneth us with his word, according as is said in Habakkuk ii. 4, *the righteous man shall live by his own faith*. For the meaning of both the places is the same: for after that Habakkuk has mocked the foolish confidence of the flesh, wherewith men are most commonly puffed up, in that they raise themselves aloft that they may fall with the greater violence; he gives them to understand that only the faithful whom God's word upholds, stand in safety, and upon sure ground. If the first exposition be liked, the second member, *make me not ashamed of my waiting*, will be added in way of exposition. For these two things, namely, that the prophet is preserved in safety by God's grace according to his word, and that he reaps the fruit of his hope, would amount to nearly the same. Nevertheless, after he has desired God to give him constancy to persevere, he seems now to proceed further; namely, that God should in very deed shew forth the thing he hath promised. And truly every man's own infirmity bears witness how many doubtings creep upon us, if after long endurance the success be not answerable to our hope, because God seemeth to disappoint us. To the same purpose tends the next verse, save that there is no express mention made of the word. For *safety* is put for life. And by these words the prophet means that as soon as God withdraweth his grace, it would be all over with his safety; but if he be established by the power of God, there is nothing that he ought to be afraid of. Many translate the word *אֶחָד*, *I will delight*, and the signification suits not amiss, because though God give the best taste of his goodness in his bare word, yet when the effect is added to it, it increases the savour of it not a little, if so be that we do not unwisely separate God's mouth from his hand. For this is the true wisdom of faith in all God's benefits, to weigh well his promises, whereof if no account be made, the use of all good things perishes, or rather turns oftentimes to our bane. Nevertheless, I like better *having an eye*, because according as every man has had more experience of God's help, so must he awaken himself the more to consider his heavenly

doctrine. He adds, moreover, that he will mind the same continually, all his life long.

118 *Thou hast trodden, &c.*] By treading down he means that God overthroweth all the despisers of his law, and casteth them down from the loftiness that they take upon them. For it is directed against the foolish, or rather frantick confidence wherewith the wicked swell when they recklessly laugh to scorn God's judgments, or rather scruple not to vaunt themselves against him, as though they were not subject to his power. And the latter member is to be noted, wherein the prophet teaches that they avail nothing by their wiles, but rather are snared in themselves, or else find at length that they were but mere sleights. Unskilfully do they mar the sense, who put in the copula *and*, as though the prophet had said that there was lying and deceit in them. For the word *חֲסִיד* signifies a subtle and crafty device, instead whereof the interpreters often translate it *a thought* or *conceit*. But this word does not sufficiently express the propriety and force of the Hebrew word. For the prophet's meaning is, that how well soever the wicked like of their own cunning, yet they do but cheat and deceive themselves. And it was needful for him to add this, for we see how fatally the greater part of the world are inebriated with their own vain imaginations, and how hard it is to be believed what the prophet avouches here, that the more sharp-sighted they seem to themselves, the more they beguile themselves. Akin to this is the meaning of the next verse, where he says that *the wicked are wiped away from the earth as dross*: for there is an unlooked-for change described by this similitude when their imaginative glory and happiness evaporate in smoke. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that God's vengeance is not manifested against the reprobates out of hand, that they should perish, or be rooted out of the world. But seeing that God sheweth himself to be the judge of the world, and riddeth the earth of them by taking them away, now one, and then one; it is no wonder the prophet speak so of their destruction. For the verbs among the Hebrews betoken oftentimes a continued act. Therefore, as God executeth his judgments by degrees, and oftentimes suspendeth punishment till he seeth the wicked abuse his long-suffering, so, on the other hand, it becomes us to continue our waiting in suspense until he compensate his long-tarriance by grievousness of punishment, according as the heathen writer says. It is evident enough that a word denoting similitude is to be supplied in the word *dross*. Neither disallow I the opinion of those

that think the wicked likened to dross, because as long as they are intermixed with the faithful, they infect and contaminate their purity; and when they are removed like scum, the cleanness of the godly shines with improved lustre. In the second place, the prophet adds that God's judgments were not profitless in him. For he began *to love the doctrine of the law more and more*. And doubtless as often as God lifteth up his hand and sheweth that the world is ruled by his government, they must needs be too too froward that commit not themselves to his protection. But seeing he offereth himself of his own accord by his word, too too blockish are they that make not haste to embrace so great a grace. Contrariwise, when he winketh over-long at men's wickedness, that zeal for godliness which should have ravished us with the love of God's word, grows cold.

120 *My flesh trembled, &c.*] At the first sight the prophet seems to contradict himself. For whereas ere-while he said that by God's severity he was blandly allured to love his testimonies, now he reports that he is seized with horror. Although these two feelings are widely different, yet if we consider by what kind of discipline God frameth us to stand in awe of his law, we shall see that they agree very well. That we may long after God's favour, it behoves us to be subdued by fear. Therefore, as fear is the beginning of love, the prophet says he was awakened up with earnest fear of God, to have a careful regard of himself. Neither is the mortifying of the flesh so easy a thing, that every man would assent to it without compulsion of violent means, and therefore no wonder God struck his servant with fear, that he might bend him to awe of him. Moreover, it is a point of no small wisdom to quake before God when he executeth his judgments, which the greater part of the world pass over with shut eyes. Therefore, by these words of the prophet we are taught that God's judgments are to be considered more attentively, that they may not only instruct us gently, but also pierce us through with such fear as may bring us to true repentance.

121 I have done judgment and righteousness: give me not over to mine oppressors.

122 Undertake thou for thy servant to his behoof, and let not the proud oppress me.

123 Mine eyes have failed for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

124 Deal with thy servant according to thy goodness, and teach me thy statutes.

125 I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may learn thy testimonies.

126 It is time for thee to be doing, O Lord; they have destroyed thy law.

127 Therefore have I loved thy commandments above gold, yea, even above most fine gold.

128 Therefore have I esteemed all thy commandments altogether rightful, and I have hated all the ways of lying.

121 *I have done judgment, &c.*] The prophet so calls upon God for help against the wicked that troubled him, as that he bears witness that he is vexed by them wrongfully. And truly if we covet to have God come down to help us, it becomes us on the other hand to meet him with the witness of a good conscience. Therefore, as he everywhere promiseth his help to the miserable that are wrongfully oppressed, this protestation of the prophet is not superfluous, that he had not provoked his enemies, but had withheld himself from all injury and misdealing, and had not gone about so much as to requite evil for evil. For in saying that he had at all times done judgment, he means that whatsoever the wicked practised, he continued steadfastly in his uprightness, and never stepped aside from the thing that is just and right. The prayer of the second verse is in a manner similar, for so had I rather translate the word עָרַב, than to translate it as others do, *delight thy servant in good*, or *make thy servant to delight in good*. Another translation gives this sense, That God should cheer up his servant with his benefits: and a third translation this, That God should inspire his heart with love and desire of right. For this is true perfection, when justice and upright dealing delight us. From the end of the verse one may gather that David here desires aid against his enemies: and therefore the word *undertake* agrees the better; as if he had said, Lord, seeing that the proud rush cruelly upon me to destroy me, step thou in between us, as though thou wert surety for me. That the letter ה is not put in between the verb and the noun, must not seem harsh, as it is often supplied. Now it is a saying full of comfort, that God taketh upon him the office of a surety to set us free. For metaphorically he is said to give his word for us, as if he should discharge us of a bond by paying the money that we owed. And his prayer tends to this, that he should not suffer the wicked to rage against us at their pleasure, but step in as an

avenger to save us. And by these words the prophet gives us to understand, that he was in extreme jeopardy, and had no other hope left him save only in the help of God.

123 *Mine eyes have failed, &c.*] First he testifies that he had encountered severe troubles, and that not for a short space only, but so as that he might have quailed for weariness and faintness. And yet he declares again, that in all those long and troublesome encounters his heart never failed him. What is meant by *fainting for my salvation*, I have expounded before; that is, that although there appear no end of his miseries, and that despair press upon him every way, yet he strives against temptation even to the swooning of his soul. If you choose to take the preter tense of the verb instead of the present tense, as it seems to be put in that sense; the prophet records that his eyes failed him, not that they started out of his head, but because through earnest beholding they gathered as it were a dimness, and yet he ceased not to wait continually for God's help. In few words, the failing of them betokens perseverance with earnest endeavour; and it is matched against the momentary heat of those that faint presently, if God grant not their requests. At the same time is denoted a vehement earnestness, which in a manner consumes all the senses. Under the term *salvation*, he comprehends not some one kind of help only, but the continual course of God's grace, even till he set his faithful ones in perfect safety. And he expresses the manner; namely, that he depended upon God's word: wherein two things are to be noted, that is to say, that safety is not otherwise waited for at God's hand than so far forth as we yield ourselves to his protection upon trust of his promises; and also that then only we yield to God the praise of saving when our hope continues fast fixed in his word. For this is the way that he must be sought; and although he hide his working, yet must we rest upon his bare promises, in which respect David terms God's word *righteous*, that he may confirm himself in the assuredness thereof, because God, when he promiseth largely, feedeth not his servants with delusive supposition.

124 *Deal with thy servant, &c.*] The two members of this verse must be read in one strain. For he does not severally desire God to be good to him, and afterwards to be his master and teacher; but rather, he beseeches him by his goodness and mercy, which he is wont to use towards all that are his, to instruct him in his law. The object, then, of the prophet's request is, that God should teach him in his statutes. But he makes his beginning with God's mercy, that he may the easier obtain the thing that he desires.

Thus, therefore, must the sentence be resolved ; Lord, deal gently with me, and shew thy goodness towards me by instructing me in thy statutes. And truly our whole happiness consists in this, that we may be thoroughly wise according to God's word. And the only hope of obtaining it is, that God should shew his mercy and goodness towards us. The prophet, therefore, commends the greatness and excellence of the benefit, while he desires to have it bestowed upon him of free gift. Now how fervently he wished this, and how earnestly he followed up this same desire, appears by the repetition which ensues in the next verse, where he says, *make me to understand that I may learn thy commandments*; by which words he expresses yet more evidently in what way God teaches those that are his; namely, by enlightening their minds with sound understanding, which else should be blind still: for it would little avail us to have the law ringing in our ears, or to have it set before our eyes in writing, and to have it expounded by man's voice, unless God, correcting our dulness, made us apt to learn by the secret instinct of his Spirit. Now if any one think that the prophet charges any merits upon God, when he boasts himself to be his servant, it is easy to be disproved. Indeed men commonly imagine, that when we are well prepared beforehand, then God addeth new grace, which they term ensuing grace. But the prophet is so far off from boasting of his own worthiness, that he rather declares how greatly he is bound to God. For it is not at the disposal of any man to make himself the servant of God, neither can any man of himself bring wherewith to purchase so great honour. Therefore, as the prophet knew full well that all men are unworthy to be registered in that order, he only alleges what grace he had obtained, that God, according to his wont, might make perfect the thing that he had begun. So also says he in Psalm cxvi. 16, *I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid*: where it appears manifestly, that he boasts not of his services, but only reports himself to be one of the members of the church.

126 *It is time for thee, &c.*] The prophet, purposing to call down upon the ungodly and wicked the vengeance they deserved, says that the ripe time is now come, because they have wantoned with outrageous frowardness against God. And the general verb, *doing*, is of more force, as if he had said, that God's delaying seemed over-long, if he discharge not the office of a judge at the moment: for it is the peculiar work of God to restrain the wicked, yea, and to punish them sharply, when he seeth them utterly past hope. If any man object, that he prays otherwise than the rule of charity de-



mands, the solution is obvious: that he treats here of the reprobates, of whose amendment there is no hope at all. For there is no doubt but that the prophet's heart was governed by the spirit of wisdom. Besides this, he complains not of his own private harms, but is moved with an unmixed and honest zeal to wish destruction to the despisers of God. For he alleges no other thing than the destroying of God's law. Whereby he shews that he regards nothing more than the service of God, and that nothing is so precious to him as the keeping of the law. I have often warned you heretofore, that our zeal is froward and turbulent as often as our private wrongs move us. Therefore it is to be marked advisedly, that the prophet's grief sprang not from any other cause, than that he could not away with the breaking of God's law. And the general effect is, that God would redress the disordered and ruinous state of things. Now it remains for us to learn by David's example, that when the earth is fraught and defiled with wickedness, so that there is no longer any awe of him, then must we call upon God, that he would shew himself the maintainer of his own glory. The use of this lesson is this, to sustain our hope and patience as often as God delayeth his judgments longer than we would have him. For before the prophet turns his speech to God, he takes this for a principle; that though God, to outward appearance, be idle for a time, yet he never forgetteth his office, but deferreth his judgments for just causes, to manifest them at length when the seasonable time arrives.

127 *Therefore have I loved, &c.*] I doubt not but this verse is connected with the verse that went before; for otherwise the illative particle would have nothing to refer to. I understand, therefore, that the cause why he esteemed God's law more than gold and precious stones, was, that this persuasion was thoroughly settled in his mind; that howsoever God wink for a time, yet shall not the havoc of justice and uprightness be always unpunished. Yea rather, the more frowardly he saw the wicked run ahead, the more did holy displeasure, inflaming his heart, incite him to the love of the law. It is a passage worthy of all observation, for it is well known what evil examples may do, because every man thinks it lawful for him to do whatsoever is done commonly. Whereby it comes to pass that evil company carries us away like a tempest. The more heedfully, therefore, must we meditate on this doctrine; that while the wicked usurp to themselves an unbridled liberty, we must consider God's judgments with the eyes of faith, thereby to quicken ourselves to the love of keeping God's law. But if

at any time this lesson might stand us in stead, at this day we had need to exert ourselves, lest the wicked conspiracy of almost the whole world to do violence to the law of God should involve ourselves. But the more outrageously the wicked vaunt themselves, the more let the reverence and love of God's law increase in us.

128 *Therefore have I esteemed, &c.*] This inference also depends upon the same doctrine; that is, that the prophet, waiting patiently for God's judgment, and also earnestly calling for the same, in all things and by all things, as they used to say, subscribed to God's law, and embraced the same without exception: and consequently, that he hated all false ways. Word for word it is, *all thy commandments of all*: but the words *of all* are referred to the things, and not to the persons; as if he should say, he approves of all the laws that God hath ordained, what things soever they enjoin. There is a like expression in Ezekiel, xliv. 30, *all oblations of all things*; namely, what kind of things soever men offer. Which the prophet has set down in such express words not without good ground, for nothing is more natural than to loathe or refuse whatsoever we like not. In God's law, according as each man is attainted with this vice or that, he could find in his heart that the commandment which is against it were razed out of the law. But it is not lawful for us to add or diminish anything at all; and since God hath knit his commandments together in a sacred and inviolable bond, it is not to be tolerated that any one of them should be divorced from the rest. We see, then, how the prophet contended, with a holy jealousy of the law, against the mischievous stubbornness of such as despised it. And truly, since we see the ungodly mock God so glaringly, one while rising up boldly against him, another while perverting each portion of the law, the more does it become us to be fired and to be courageous in maintaining God's truth. But especially the extreme ungodliness of our age requires that the faithful should exercise themselves in this study. For profane men now vie with each other in scornfully girding at the doctrine of salvation, and endeavour to bring God's holy word in contempt by their jeering, and others pour out their blasphemies without ceasing. Wherefore we cannot avoid the charge of treacherous apathy, except our hearts become hot with jealousy, and holy heartburnings set us on fire. For the prophet says not only that he approved of God's law thoroughly and without exception, but he adds also, *that he hated all the ways of lying*, or all false ways. And, doubtless, none allow God's commandment in earnest, but such as reject all the slanders wherewith the wicked infect or

darken the pureness of sound doctrine. There is no doubt but that by the *way of lying* the prophet denotes whatsoever is opposed to the pureness of the law, as if he had said, he detested all corruptions that are repugnant to God's word.

129 Thy testimonies are wonderful things: therefore hath my soul kept them.

130 The entering into thy words is light, that giveth understanding to the little ones.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted; because I loved thy commandments.

132 Look upon me, and pity me, according to thy judgment towards them that love thy name.

133 Direct my steps according to thy word; and let none iniquity have dominion in me.

134 Rescue me from the oppression of men: and I will keep thy precepts.

135 Shew the light of thy countenance upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

136 Rivers of waters have gushed out of mine eyes, because they have not kept thy laws.

129 *Thy testimonies are, &c.*] I thought good to translate it so, to avoid equivocation. For the prophet means not simply that the doctrine of the law is wonderful, but that it comprehends high and hidden mysteries. And therefore he says, that because he saw a sublime and admirable wisdom comprehended in the law of God, he was led to reverence it. But this is a thing to be marked heedfully, because God's law is scornfully despised by the greater part of men, while they have not duly tasted the doctrine of it, nor acknowledge that God speaketh from on high, that, casting down the pride of the flesh, he may raise us upward by the apprehension of faith. Also we gather by this place, that it is impossible for any man to keep God's law with all his heart, unless he stand in reverent awe of it: because reverence is the beginning of pure and right subjection. I told you that many disdain God's word, because they think it inferior to their own wit. Nay rather, many of them cast themselves the more presumptuously into this traitorous contempt, that they may make a shew of their own wit. But however worldly men soothe themselves in that proud contempt, yet is the prophet's commendation true: that in God's law are comprehended such mysteries as far exceed all the thoughts of men.

130 *The entering, &c.*] The effect is, that the light of doctrine is so clear in God's word, that it enlightens instantly at the first sight. For פתח is, properly, *an opening*, but by a metaphor is taken for *a door*. And therefore the old translator has not improperly translated it *a beginning*; provided we consider he treats here of the first rudiments. As if the prophet had said, that not only such as have learned the whole law with the utmost exactness, and such as have been perfectly exercised in it, discern clear light there; but also such as have tasted it slenderly, and, as they say, saluted it at the porch. Now must we reason from the less to the greater: for if tyroes and novices begin to be enlightened at their first entrance, what will come to pass when a man is let into a full knowledge? In the second member the prophet explains himself yet better. For by little ones, he means such as neither excel in wit, nor are furnished with wisdom, but rather are unlearned and raw; and such does he avouch to be endued with understanding, as soon as they have received the principles of God's law. Moreover, this sentence ought to be a most powerful stimulus to excite in us a desirousness to learn, since we hear that even those who are despised as incapables in the sight of the world, do, by God's law, attain such wisdom as may suffice to eternal salvation, if they apply their mind unto it. For though it be not given to all men to attain to the highest degree, yet all the godly generally may proceed thus far, that they may attain to an unerring rule of life; and so no man that yields himself to be taught of God, shall lose his labour in his school, because he shall reap inestimable fruit even in the very vestibule. Meanwhile we are warned that all those wander in the dark, that follow their own understanding. For by affirming that the little ones are enlightened, David gives us to understand that men never become meet scholars of the law, till, being void of all self-trust, they submit themselves to God. Let the papists laugh, as they do, because we would have the scripture read by all men without exception, yet is that no falsehood which God avoucheth by the mouth of David, namely, that the light of his doctrine is set forth for fools and unlearned. Therefore, God will not disappoint the desire of such as acknowledge their own lack of skill, and submit themselves humbly to him.

131 *I opened my mouth, &c.*] By these words he gives us to understand that he was inflamed with such love and longing for God's law, that he never ceased sighing for it. For he has used a very apt metaphor, in likening himself to such as are hungry, or burn with parching thirst: for like as they shew their burning by opening the mouth and

distressful panting, as though they would suck up the whole air; even so, the prophet says that he himself sweltered with continual unquietness. Therefore the opening of the mouth, and the drawing in of the breath coldly, is matched against a cold assent to God's word. And here the Holy Ghost teacheth with what ardour the knowledge of the heavenly doctrine is to be sought. Whence we gather, that as many as fail to profit in God's law, pay the penalty of their own apathy. Nevertheless, together with fervour he points to constancy also, when he says he panted continually.

132 *Look upon me, &c.*] In this verse he requires God to have regard of him, according as he is always wont to look to those that are his. For the word *וַיִּשְׁמַח*, in this place, as in many others, signifies *a common rule or ordinary usage*. Again he adds to what end he desires to be regarded; namely, that he may be released from his miseries. It is therefore the prayer of an afflicted person, who, seeming to be destitute of God's help, and unable to conclude otherwise than that he is neglected and forsaken of God, notwithstanding weighs with himself, that it is against the nature and custom of that very God so to do. As if he should say, Although there appears not to me any sign of thy favour, but rather my state is so miserable and forlorn, that as far as flesh can conjecture, I deem that thou hast turned thy back upon me; yet, forasmuch as even from the very beginning of the world to this day, thou hast by many proofs testified thyself to be merciful to thy servants, according to this rule, shew thou the like loving-kindness towards me. Moreover, lest the hearts of them should faint, whom God answereth not out of hand, it is to be marked advisedly, that the prophet had been oppressed a long time with miseries without any likelihood of relief. At the same time, however, it is to be noted, that the prophet craves not this of God in any other respect than upon trust of his free goodness. Whence we gather, that although he excelled in holiness above all others, yet had he no other refuge than this. As touching the word *judgment*, we may learn by the prophet's example, to acquaint ourselves with God's nature from our various experiences, that we may be well assured that he is merciful to us. And doubtless, except we had a clear perception of his grace by daily experience, which of us durst approach him? But if our eyes be not blind, he buildeth up our faith by testimonies, evident enough and more than enough, so that we need not doubt but he regardeth all the godly: only we must endeavour to be of that number who love his name. Moreover, he points to the faithful by this

title, because such as fear God slavishly are not worthy to be reckoned among his servants. For he requireth a frank obedience at our hands, so that nothing may be more delectable to us than to follow whithersoever he calleth. Nevertheless, it is to be considered herewith, that this lovingness springs from faith. Nay rather, the prophet commends it here as the grand effect of faith, while he separates the godly, who lean upon God's grace, from the heathen, who, being given over to the enticements of the world, never lift up their minds heavenward.

133 *Direct my steps, &c.*] By these words, as often elsewhere, he shews that there is no other rule to live well by, save when men frame themselves wholly to the obedience of God's law. For we have seen already, very often in this Psalm, that as long as men give themselves leave to gad after their own inventions, God spurneth from him all that ever they do, however anxiously they may toil. But as the prophet says that men's lives are then only framed aright when they yield themselves absolutely to God's service, so again he confesses, that to do so is by no means in their own will or power. And truly, God's law will make us nothing the better by prescribing to us what is right; in consideration whereof the outward preaching is compared to a dead letter. David, therefore, being well learned in the law, desires to have an obedient heart given him, that he may walk in the way that is set before him. And these two things must be marked severally; namely, that God dealeth bounteously with men, while he calleth them to him by his word and doctrine, and yet that all this is but cold and unprofitable, until he rule with his Spirit those whom he hath taught by his word. And whereas he desires not simply to have his steps directed, but to have them directed in God's word; hereby we may learn that he hunted not for secret revelations, and set the word at nought, as many fanatics do; but coupled the outward doctrine with the inward grace of the spirit; even as this is the most complete perfection of the faithful, to have God engrave on their hearts what he sheweth to be right by his word. Nothing, therefore, is more flat than this device, that because God appointeth men what he will have them to do, therefore he maketh account of their own power and strength; for in vain does God's doctrine ring in our ears, except his Spirit pierce effectually into our hearts. For the prophet confesses it is to no purpose for him to read or hear the law of God, unless his life be ruled by the secret motion of the Holy Ghost, that he may walk in the righteousness of the doctrine. In the second member, he puts us in mind how



requisite it is for us to be occupied continually in this petition. For he acknowledges himself to be the bondsman of sin, until God's hand be stretched out to help him: Guide me, says he, that iniquity may not reign in me. Therefore, as long as we are left to ourselves, Satan's tyranny flourishes and makes way, so that we are not free to rid ourselves from iniquity. But the one only freedom of the godly, is to be governed by God's Spirit, that they may not succumb to iniquity, although harassed with hard and painful encounters.

134 *Rescue me, &c.*] The prophet, reporting what had befallen him, shews, by his own example, that all the godly are exposed to spoil and oppression, and live like sheep as it were in wolves' mouths, unless God defend them. For seeing that very few are ruled by God's Spirit, it is no marvel that all love of equity is banished from the world, and all men rush everywhere into all kind of wickedness, some impelled by cruelty, and some wedded to fraud. Therefore, when the prophet saw himself overwhelmed on all sides with injuries, he hied him to God for rescue. For by this word he intimates that if he be not preserved by miracle, it is all over with him. In the second member he promises thankfulness, because there is nothing that strengthens us better in the following of uprightness and just dealing than when we find by experience that God's defence is of more value to us than all the unlawful helps that worldly men are wont to resort to. And by this place we are taught that we must not strive with the wicked in maliciousness, but content ourselves with the only redemption of God, although they assault us never so unjustly and violently; and also that as often as we shall have had experience of God's grace in delivering us, it must be as a spur to quicken us up to follow uprightness. For he rescueth us not to any other end, than that the fruits of our deliverance should be seen in our life: and we are too froward if this experience suffice us not; namely, that such as continue in the unfeigned fear of God, abide always in safety through his help, although they have the whole world against them.

135 *Shew the light of, &c.*] In this verse is repeated a prayer which we have heard a good many times before. For the prophet shews that he sets by nothing so much as to understand God's law aright; for when he prays God to shew the light of his countenance upon his servant, first he seeks to gain himself God's fatherly favour, (for nothing is to be hoped for at his hand unless we are in his favour,) and at the same time he shews the greatness of the benefit; as if he should say he desires no better assurance of God's love

than that he may profit aright in his law. Whence we gather, as I observed lately, that he preferred the heavenly doctrine above all the goods in the world. And would God this affection lived in our hearts! but that which the prophet extols so much, is neglected by almost all men. And if any be pricked with this desire, we see them presently relapse into the enticements of the world, so that very few set aside all other desires and seek earnestly with David for the doctrine of the law. Furthermore, as God vouchsafeth not this privilege to any, save such as he hath embraced with his fatherly love, it is proper to begin with this form of praying, that he should make his countenance to shine upon us. Notwithstanding, this manner of speech expresses somewhat more; namely, that God only then cheers the faithful with the beams of his favour, when he enlightens their minds with the true understanding of his law. But oftentimes it happens that God's countenance is overcast with clouds even to them also, when he deprives them of the genuine taste of his word.

136 *Rivers of waters, &c.*] Here David declares himself to have been inflamed with no ordinary zeal for God's glory, that he melted away into tears because the law was despised. For although he speak hyperbolically, yet he utters truly and plainly with what affection he was endued; like as also in Psalm lxix. 10, he says, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. And truly, wheresoever God's Spirit reigns, it raises up this fervent zeal to burn the hearts of the godly, when they see the commandment of the most high God accounted as a thing of nought. For it is not enough for each of us to endeavour to please God, unless he desire also that his law may be had in estimation of all men. In this-wise did holy Lot, as Peter witnesses, vex his soul when he saw a sower of all wickedness prevail in Sodom: 2 Peter, ii. 8. Now if the wickedness of the world forced the godly to so great sorrow in times past, we in these days are fallen into such corruptness that they are treble and four times insensate that behold the present state without emotion and with dry eyes. For how great is the phrensy of the world in despising God and refusing his doctrine: a few there are, indeed, who with the mouth profess themselves willing to receive it; but scarce one in ten proves that he does so by his life. Meanwhile, countless multitudes rush into the wiles of Satan and the pope. Some are as dull as brute beasts, and many Epicureans openly scoff at all kind of religion in the world. Then if there remain any spark of godliness in us, not only small drops but full streams of tears must gush from our eyes. But if we covet to afford a token of pure

and uncorrupted zeal, let the beginning of our grief be this, that we see ourselves to be yet far off from perfect observing of the law, or rather that the wicked lusts of the flesh rise up from time to time against the righteousness of God.

137 Righteous art thou, O Lord, and right are thy judgments.

138 Thou hast commanded righteousness in thy testimonies, and especially truth.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine adversaries have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word is greatly fined, and thy servant loveth it.

141 Small am I and despised, yet have I not forgotten thy precepts.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have found me out; thy commandments are my delight.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: make me to understand, and I shall live.

137 *Righteous art thou, &c.*] He yields the praise of righteousness to God, and acknowledges the same in his law also. For whereas some understand *judgments* to be the justice executed in chastising the sins of men, it seems not to apply so fitly. And as the adjective *רש* is put with judgments in the singular number, the sentence must be resolved thus: that there is none of God's judgments which is not righteous. If any one like to take it for a substantive, the sense will continue, for the most part, the same. Now, though all men grant that God is righteous, yet has the prophet expressed more than the common sort of men, or rather than the whole world, perceive: for by terming God *righteous*, he gives us to understand, that, as soon as men depart from him, there is not a particle of righteousness to be found anywhere else. And whereas he adds, that the proof and assurance of this righteousness is seen in his law, he teaches us that God is robbed of his praise, if we subscribe not to his precepts. To the same purpose makes the verse following; namely, that God hath delivered us full and exact righteousness and truth in his law. For the adverb *במיוחד*, which signifies *especially*, matches better with the nouns, than with the verb *commanded*; and that, because it was God's purpose to shew there the perfect rule of righte-

ousness. And the law is adorned with these titles of commendation, that all of us may learn to fetch wisdom thence, and that no man may fancy to himself any other righteousness or rightness than that: according as every man could willingly find in his heart to devise to himself a new pattern of righteousness.

139 *My zeal hath, &c.*] He speaks of his persecutors, at whose hands it is certain that he was put to much trouble. But although they were virulent and cruel towards him, yet denies he that he was so much offended at his own private wrongs, as at the breach of God's law: nay, rather, he says that the grief of this did so fret him, that his own harms moved him not at all. An example profitable above all things; for we are too tender in bearing wrongs: and therefore if we are but touched with a finger, straightway we are in a flame of anger: but, in the mean time, we are coldly affected at the most grievous offences against God. But if we are as zealous as the prophet, it will force us to another manner of sorrow, that will occupy us wholly. In the next verse he notes the cause of this zeal to be love of the heavenly doctrine. For to be displeased with the contempt of it, or severely to condemn the contempt of it, unless it holds us firmly bound by the love of it, is mere dissimulation. And he says, he loves God's word, not rashly, nor with a blind and unadvised affection, because it is pure, and clean from all dregs and dross, even as gold or silver is: for the particle *fined* contains in it this metaphor, which, though it seem to contain nothing but what is commonly known, yet, vindicating God's word from all lewd and malicious judgments, it expresses graphically the true obedience of faith. For how few are there that either by their distrustfulness, or waywardness, or pride, or voluptuousness, stain not God's word with some spot! Seeing, then, that the flesh is so rebellious, it is no small commendation of the heavenly doctrine, to be likened to gold that is thoroughly fined, so that it shines clear from all filth. Furthermore, it avails not a little to verify the testimony, that the prophet confirms it by personal experiment. Therefore, to restrain our licentiousness the more effectually, as often as we surmise any fault in God's word, he tells us that he speaks from the unfeigned feeling of his heart, because he has a blissful pleasure in that purity of which he speaks.

141 *Small am I, &c.*] The meaning is, that, although he were tried with poverty and many other miseries, yet he continued steadfastly in the pursuit of godliness, and in the keeping of the law. For the prophet states that the reason why God was despised, was, that every man gives praise to

God just in proportion as he is gorged with his bounty ; and scarcely one among a hundred will be found that will set his mind to the serving of God, unless he may have all his wishes gratified. Hence it comes to pass that hypocrites, as long as they are full fed, as long as they heap up riches, and as long as they increase in power and estimation, are very lavish in praising God. But if he begin to handle them anything roughly, presently that blessed name is heard of no more. Forasmuch, therefore, as men are commonly mercenary in serving God, we must learn by the prophet's example, that true godliness is disinterested, so that we cease not to praise God although he afflict us with adversity, and make us despised in the eyes of the world. And, no doubt, this upbraiding of Christ, John vi. 26, is to be marked advisedly: *Ye seek me, not because ye have seen my miracles, but because ye were filled with the loaves.* Those, then, serve God from the heart, and sincerely, who abide steadfast in his fear, although their state is mean and despicable ; in a word, who look not for reward on earth, but go on unwearied in the career of their warfare, through heat and cold, poverty, dangers, slanders, and mockeries.

142 *Thy righteousness, &c.*] Here he commends God's law by another encomium, that *his righteousness is everlasting* : as if he should say, all other rules of life, however attractive in appearance, have nothing in them but fleeting shadow. For, no doubt, he indirectly contrasts the doctrine of the law, with all manner of precepts that ever were set out, in order to gather all the faithful to the obedience of it, on the ground that it is the school of perfect wisdom. For how much soever more of plausibility there may be in the refined and subtle disquisitions of men, yet is there nothing firm or solid at the bottom of them. But as for the firmness of God's law, he proves it in the next verse from one point of it ; namely, that being sore vexed with temptations, he found continual comfort in it. And the true test of our profiting is this, whatsoever distresses straiten us, to set against them the comfort of God's word, wherewith to efface all heaviness from our minds. And he expresses more now than he did before: for there he said only that he had served God reverently, though by reason of his rough and severe handling he might seem to lose his labour. But now he says, that when he is vexed and tormented, he finds the most soothing delight in God's law, which assuages all griefs, and not only tempers the bitterness of them, but also seasons them with a certain sweetness. And, surely, where this taste lives not to afford us delight, nothing is more natural than to be swallowed up with heaviness. Also the

expression is to be noted, whereby the prophet teaches that although he were on all sides beset and overtaken, yet he had sufficient remedy in this, that he embraced the comfort offered him by the word of God. Now, as this could not be true of the bare commandments, which are so far from remedying our diseases, that they rather fill us with anxiety, it is certain, that, by a synecdoche, the whole doctrine of the law is comprehended under the commandments: in which law God not only requireth the thing that is right, but also openeth the gate of perfect happiness to his elect, by calling them to the hope of eternal salvation. Nay, under the law are contained here both the free adoption and all the promises that flow from it.

144 *The righteousness, &c.*] He repeats that which he had said lately; namely, that there is great dissimilarity between God's righteousness and men's forgeries: the splendour whereof vanishes away, whereas the other stands steadfast for ever. And he inculcates this twice; because, though the world be forced to yield the praise of rightfulness to God's law, yet the greater part are carried away to their own speculations, so that nothing can be more difficult than to hold us fast to the service of God himself. David's drift here is this, that righteousness of an age, or everlasting righteousness, is not comprehended elsewhere than in God's law, and that it is in vain to seek it anywhere else: and therefore here is set down a clearer definition of righteousness, which may hold us within the bounds of the law. I read the latter member, namely, *make me understand, and I shall live*, in one strain: for though David desire to have his mind enlightened by God, yet he devises not any other way of understanding, than by profiting aright in the law. Furthermore, he teaches here, that men, properly, do not live, if they want the light of true wisdom. And no doubt, as men are not created to the end that they may fill their paunches, as swine and asses do, but to exercise themselves in the knowledge and service of God, when they abandon this privilege their life is worse than a hundred deaths. David therefore professes, that verily with him to live is, not only to be fed with meat and drink, and to enjoy earthly comforts, but to aspire to a better life; which cannot be, but by the direction of faith. And this is a very needful warning. For though it be an ordinary and trite saying everywhere, that man is born with this distinction, that he should excel the brute beasts in understanding, yet do the greater part of men, as it were of set purpose, stifle whatsoever light God poureth into their minds. I grant, indeed, that all men have a desire to be sharp-witted: but how few direct their aspira-



tions to heaven, and consider that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom? Seeing, then, that the minding of the heavenly life is overwhelmed by earthly cares, men, in fact, bury themselves, that living to the world they may die to God. Nevertheless, as I have said heretofore, the prophet under the name of *life* betokens all that his heart can desire; as if he should say, Lord, although I may be as good as dead, yet shall I need no more to revive me than this one grace, that thou enlighten my mind with the knowledge of thy heavenly doctrine.

145 I have cried with my whole heart; answer me, O Lord: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I have called upon thee; save me, and I will keep thy testimonies.

147 I have prevented the *morning* twilight, and have cried: I looked up unto thy word.

148 Mine eyes have prevented the night-watches, to occupy my mind in thy word.

149 Hear my voice, according to thy mercy: O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They are come near me that persecute *me* of malice: *and* are departed from thy law.

151 Thou art near at hand, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth.

152 I learned first by thy testimonies, that thou hast established them for ever.

145 *I have cried, &c.*] This verse may be read in one strain, so that in the end he may shew what he required by his crying; thus the meaning would be, that forasmuch as he burned with the most intense longing to keep the law, he made prayers continually on this subject. But the verse following compels me to distinguish the sentence otherwise; for no doubt it is repeated there again. His request then is, that God should hear him, and in token of thankfulness he promises to keep his commandments. And in employing the term *cry* indefinitely, he expresses not wherefore he prayed, but only teaches that whereas the children of the world are haled hither and thither, he levelled all the affections of his heart at God alone; that is, he depended only upon him. Now, then, forasmuch as the world is compelled to grant that God is the author of all good things, out of that principle flow many formal prayers; and therefore

David avouches himself to have prayed with his whole heart. And when he shall have obtained his desires, he sets God's glory as his end to aim at, because he will addict himself to serve him so much the more earnestly. For although God declare that he is worshipped aright by the sacrifice of praise, yet David, to distinguish himself from the hypocrites, who do but dishonour God's name with their cold and languid praises, declares with good reason, that he will give thanks with his life and his works. In the next verse though he speak no new thing, yet does he enunciate it more expressly. And first he says he cried unto God, and afterwards adds that he commended his welfare unto him by his prayers: whereby he intimates that whether he were in safety, or whether there hung any danger over him that threatened death, he evermore leaned upon God, because he was fully persuaded that he could not be safe otherwise than by having him the guardian of his welfare.

147 *I have prevented, &c.*] The word *הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ* is improperly translated in this place *twilight*: for it signifies rather the break of the day before the morning gives light. But as the Latins derive the word *crepusculum*, which signifies *twilight*, from *creperum*, which signifies *doubtful*, so that it may denote the doubtful time between light and darkness, I was unwilling to be over-nice about the term: only let the readers understand fully that here is not denoted the evening twilight commencing with sunset, but the period of imperfect light at the dawning of day. David then expresses the most eager haste in saying that he prevented the coming of the morning with his prayers. And by the word *cry* is always denoted earnestness: for it is not referred so much to the loudness of the voice, as to the agony of the mind. But he makes mention of hasting, that he may the better commend his perseverance; for he says, that although he were so ready to pray, yet was he not presently weary of it like the faithless, who murmur and wrangle with God if he grant not their requests out of hand. And so by joining patience of hope with earnestness of desire, he shews the true manner of praying, according also as Paul, Philip. iv. 6, bidding us to make our petitions known unto God with thanksgiving, warns us to bridle our turbulent affections while we are praying: for of praying, this also is one end, even to nourish our hope by it. Neither is the mention of the word superfluous, for the only bridle to restrain the headiness of our flesh, is to have the word of God continually before our eyes.

148 *Mine eyes have, &c.*] He intimates that he was more attentively bent on the minding of God's law, than

watchmen of the night are to keep watch. Others will have the word מוֹשׁ to be put for *to dispute*: which if we admit, the meaning will be, that the prophet was so desirous to teach, (not to shew what he could do, but for the welfare of his brethren,) that he gave himself no rest. But the word *muse* agrees better with this place: for it had been out of season to dispute of God's word in the night-time; but then, alone and silent, he bethought himself of the things that he had learned before, so that no part of the night was unoccupied with meditation on the law.

149 *Hear my voice, &c.*] First he declares that he had no other hope of prevailing with God, than by leaning upon his free goodness; for whatsoever the saints allege in prayer, they must needs begin at the mere grace of God, neither means he anything else by *judgments* in the second member. For as God hath revealed his goodness in his word, the assurance thereof must be fetched from thence. The prophet, then, knowing himself to have need of God's mercy, hied him straight to his word, where God, alluring men gently to him, promiseth that his grace shall be ready and open for all. Wherefore, that any one may assuredly believe that God will be merciful to him, let him learn by the example of the prophet to desire God to shew himself the same that he hath promised to be. When others expound the word *judgments*, God's manner or custom, because he is wont to deal graciously with those that are his; although I utterly reject it not, yet I take it to be harsh and irrelevant. But the interpretation which I have alleged flows very well. Moreover, he requests to be *quickened*, to shew that he is but a dead man even in the midst of life, save in so far as he is sustained by the power of God. And surely, whosoever is well acquainted with his own infirmity, will sue to be quickened every moment, and esteem his life as nothing. Add to this, that God often so exercised his servant, that he might justly send up his prayers as it were out of his grave, that he might be restored from death to life.

150 *They are come near me, &c.*] As the word קִרְבִּי is put in construction, I doubt not but that the word זִמָּה is to be read in the genitive case; and so I expound it, that they draw near to do him harm. And I marvel what could move the interpreters to translate it, *the persecutors have approached*, or *drawn near unto wickedness*, which is other than the property of the tongue will bear; and, to say nothing of the fact that the word זִמָּה signifies rather *depravity* or *malice*, than *an act of wickedness*. Therefore he says that those press upon him, who are set upon malice, and that they so rush upon him to do him mischief, that

they are far off from the law of God, because they throw far behind them all regard of right and equity. Most miserable had the prophet's case been, to see his enemies, (who had shaken off the fear of God and reverence of his law,) threatening his life, if God had not been near at hand on the contrary part, according as he adds immediately after. But he raises himself up with this comfort, that God, seeing his servants sore pressed, doth himself also make speed to succour them; according as Paul, Phil. iv. 5, says, *Be not careful, the Lord is at hand, let your moderation be known unto all men.* The close of the verse tends to this, that God never forsaketh nor disappointeth his servants in their necessity, because he is true in his promises: and in them he assureth us that he will always have a regard of their welfare. Therefore, that we may not doubt that God's hand will always be ready to repulse the assaults of our enemies, let this be ever impressed upon our hearts, that it is not for nought that he promiseth so often in his word, to become the maintainer of our welfare.

152 *I learned first, &c.*] Others translate it, *I have known long since of thy testimonies*: but, although I do not directly repudiate it, yet I should more willingly retain the interpretation I have given; namely, that the prophet not only knew there was everlasting steadiness in God's testimonies, but also that he had gotten the same knowledge out of the testimonies themselves. For when the Hebrews purpose to express the Latin word *de*, which signifies *of* or *concerning*, they oftentimes use the particle *ל*, or the letter *ל*. And therefore he says he had learned of God's testimonies, or was taught by them, that they are established for ever. And the first point of faith is this, that God's word is not only of credit and assurance for a time, but also continues evermore unchangeable: for otherwise, one could not include the hope of eternal salvation under it. Now, too, that this assuredness may abide in our minds, it is needful for us to have the inward revelation of the Spirit. For until God seal the certainty of his word within us, we shall always be wavering in the belief of it. Yet not without cause does the prophet say, that he learned it by the word. For when God shineth into us by his Spirit, then also causeth he this holy truth, which endures for ever, to shine forth in the mirror of his word.

153 Behold mine affliction, and pluck me out of it; for I have not been unmindful of thy law.

154 Debate thou my case, and rescue me: quicken me according to thy word.

155 Welfare is far from the ungodly; because they have not sought thy statutes.

156 Great are thy compassions, O Lord: quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 My persecutors and mine oppressors are many; *yet* have I not swerved from thy testimonies.

158 I saw the transgressors, and chid at them, because they kept not thy word.

159 See, Lord, how I have loved thy commandments: quicken me according to thy mercifulness.

160 The beginning of thy word is truth; and all the judgments of thy righteousness endure for ever.

153 *Behold mine affliction, &c.*] He teaches by his own example, that the followers of godliness must not be out of heart, though they receive an evil reward in the world. For their state upon earth is a warfare, and therefore it is not meet for them to be dismayed by adversity, but, rather, to rest content with this comfort, that the gate is open for them to pray to God: yet does not the prophet boast of his endeavouring to keep the law, as though he looked to be rewarded for his services at God's hand; but only shews himself to be one of God's servants, in like manner as he has spoken of his hope in other places. Although this reason properly pertains to the present case; for it is a sign of rare courage, when we are not led away from the fear of God by adversities, but wrestle against temptations, so as to seek him even when he seems purposely to drive us away. In the verse following he points out the manner of his affliction, namely, that he is vexed wrongfully by evil and dishonest persons. Literally, it is, *Plead thou my plea*: which imports as much as to take under his patronage him that is oppressed, or to undertake the support of his cause, or to maintain his right. First, the prophet, in calling God to the defence of his case, shews himself to be wrongfully oppressed, either by violence, or by slanders, or by crafty policies; and in seeking a deliverer, he shews himself to be too weak to resist them, or else to be so entangled, that the only remaining hope is in the deliverance of God. In the second member, the letter *h* seems to be taken for the letter *d*, the mark of similitude, under which he had set down the like form of praying a little before. Again, since David complains here that he is as it were held in fetters by his enemies, if he be not rescued by the hand of a deliverer, he with good reason desires to be restored to life; for he that is so cast down,

is like a dead man. Also there is aptly added, *according to thy word*, for the hope of life shines to us from hence, that God by his word promiseth to become our deliverer. Whence the prophet, breathing forth sighs for the light out of darkness, sustains and cheers up himself by the word. If any one prefer the other sense, then David will not simply desire to have life given unto him, but to have a spiritual life given him, that he might be heartened to faith, the fear of God, and the endeavour to live holily.

155 *Welfare is far from, &c.*] Because the prophet was persuaded that the world is ruled by the secret providence of God, who is a righteous judge, out of that wellspring he draws this sentence, that the wicked are far removed from welfare, and welfare from them; whence springs boldness of praying. For like as God turneth away from the despisers of his word, so is he ready to help his servants. Furthermore it is to be noted that when the prophet saw his enemies puffed up with their prosperity, he, on the contrary part, lifted up his heart by faith, so that he believed assuredly that all their delights were cursed, and tended to destruction. Therefore as often as the ungodly have the world at will, so that being daintily pampered they exult in their own fatness, let us for our defence learn to take hold of this buckler which the Holy Ghost holdeth out to us; namely, that they shall at length perish miserably because they seek not after God's commandments. From whence springs the contrary lesson, that although the faithful, while they walk uncorruptly in the fear of God, may be as sheep appointed to the slaughter, yet is their welfare at hand, which is defended by the secret keeping of God: and to this meaning does the prophet in the verse following add, that God's mercies are many; as if he should say, none other shall be saved but such as flee to God's mercy. Furthermore, that he may be bold to approach with more assuredness, he not only says that God is merciful, but also mightily magnifies and extols his compassions. Whence we gather, that he was content with God's mercies in suchwise as that he sought no help from his own deservings. Nevertheless, therewith it is to be noted, that the prophet was sore vexed with many temptations, since he was fain to set this amplitude of mercy against them. Now whether you read *great* or *many*, makes little difference. That which follows, that God *should quicken him according to his judgments*, I understand of his promises. For whereas others take it for *his manner* or *custom*, I have shewn already heretofore, that it applies not so fitly. The prophet therefore confirms again, that life cannot otherwise be hoped for or required at God's hand, than when hope is conceived out



of his word; and that does he oftentimes beat into us, because we are very forgetful in this behalf. But that we may fearlessly apply to ourselves whatsoever grace God promiseth to his servants, let us always bear in mind the said principle concerning God's manifold or great mercies. For if we imagine that God promiseth either because he ought to do it, or because we have deserved it, immediately then will steal upon us a misgiving which will shut the gate to our prayers. But if we are thoroughly persuaded that God is not moved to promise salvation, for any other cause than that he is merciful, we shall not doubt to approach him, because he hath bound himself to us of his own accord.

157 *My persecutors, &c.*] As in other places, so here also he testifies, that although he had been provoked by many injuries, yet he departed not from the right way, which I told you was a proof of great and singular constancy. For it is an easy matter to do well among good men. But if the wicked assault us, if one assail us with force, another rob us, a third circumvent us with wiles, another attack us with slanders, it is hard for us to persist in our uprightness: nay rather, we fall to howling among wolves. Besides this, the license that is given them of doing what they list with impunity, is a most powerful engine to batter our faith, inasmuch as God, by winking at it, seemeth to abandon us to the spoil. Therefore by *God's testimonies*, the prophet means not only the rule of living well and righteously, but also the promises. As if he should say, Lord, neither have I departed from uprightness, although occasion were given me by the wicked, neither have I shaken off my trust in thy grace, but patiently waited for thy help. And both of them are necessary. For though he that is wronged encounter the malice of his enemies with doing well, and forbear all evil-doing, yet if he hang not wholly upon God, this uprightness of his is not enough to save him: not that any man behaves himself so moderately, save he that leans upon God and waits to be delivered by him; but if this could be the case, yet were there not sufficient force in this half virtue, because the salvation of God is laid up for the faithful that call for it with the earnest feeling of faith. Now whosoever, upon trust that God will be his deliverer, pillars and supports his mind with his promises, will endeavour even to overcome evil with good. In the next verse, he proceeds yet further, declaring that he was inflamed with a holy zeal because he saw God's law despised by the wicked. Nevertheless the interpreters agree not in one word, for some derive the word *אֶתְקַוֵּיתָה* from *קִוֵּי*, which often signifies *to chide*, and again others derive it, in the conjugation hithpael, from *קִטַּו*, which

signifies *to cut up or destroy*. I embrace the former interpretation, because it is most received among the learned, and applies best. The prophet therefore shews himself to have been inflamed with so great a zeal of God's law, that he could not bear with the wicked scorning of it. Nevertheless, by the word *chide* may be denoted as well the inward heart-burning, as the outward rebuking wherewith he rose up openly against the despisers of God. And therefore some translate it, *I shuddered*, or *I was grieved*. And truly no man will put himself forth to contend for the maintenance of God's glory, but he that hath first chafed within himself and been grieved at heart, like as, conversely, after this holy heart-burning there follows commonly an active doing. To be brief, we are warned by the example of the prophet, that the contempt of God's word is to be taken in such displeasure, as that our heart must grow hot even to chiding. First, therefore, let grief sting us inwardly, and afterwards, as occasion shall serve, let us endeavour to repress their pride by strenuous action, and let us have no misgivings about drawing down their resentment upon us.

159 *See, Lord, how, &c.*] You must bear in mind what I have told you of before; that the saints, as often as they commend their own godliness before God, obtrude not their deservings as the ground of their confidence, but take it for a principle, that God, who discerneth his worshippers from the heathen and wicked, will be merciful to them because they seek him with their whole heart. Besides this, an unfeigned love of God's law is a certain sign of adoption, since it is the work of the Holy Ghost. The prophet, therefore, though he take not anything upon himself, justly alleges his own godliness, that he may conceive the more assured hope of obtaining by reason of God's grace, whereof he had had experience. At the same time we are taught, that the true keeping of the law springs only from free love. For God requireth willing sacrifices, and the beginning of a good life is, to love him, according as Moses says, Deut. x. 12, *What requireth thy God now at thy hand O Israel, but that thou shouldest love him?* which same is repeated also in the summary of the law, Deut. vi. 5, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. And in this respect David said before, that God's law was not only precious, but also delightful to him. Now as in keeping the law, a man should begin with willing obedience, so as that nothing may delight us more than God's justice, so again it is to be considered, that our minds are not inclined to this affection, otherwise than by the feeling of God's free goodness and fatherly love. For the bare commandments are so far from winning men to them, that they rather scare

them away. He, therefore, that hath tasted of God's goodness from the teaching of the law, is the only man that will set his mind to love it in turn. And as the prophet repeats so often this prayer, that God should quicken him, we gather that he was well acquainted with the frailty of his own life, insomuch that he thought not that men live furtherforth than as God breathed life into them every instant. Moreover, it is likely that he had been beset by many deaths, in order that he should have the more care to repair to the fountain of life. And again, he lays the foundation of his faith in the goodness of God. Whereby we perceive how far he was even now from boasting of his merits, when he protested that he loved the law of God.

160 *The beginning of thy, &c.*] Although the prophet's meaning is not ambiguous, yet may the words be understood two ways. For some interpret the word *beginning* thus, that God's truth shines forth manifestly in his word, even at the very first entrance into it, so that it may well be called the beginning of it. And this sentence, namely, that as soon as we cast our eyes upon the heavenly doctrine, instantly the truth of it meets us, contains a profitable lesson, if we are endued with eyes to see it. Perhaps, however, with no less propriety others make a distinction, that even from the beginning God's word was always sure to trust unto, and so continues unto the end. For these two members are perfectly compatible, that God had been true to his promise even from the beginning, and also that he continueth like himself invariably. When they refer the word *judgments* to God's works and not to his doctrine, although I disallow it not, yet is it not in harmony with the context. Let us therefore hold to this sense, that since the time that God began to speak, he has always been faithful in his promises, and never disappointed the hope of his servants, and that the course of this truthfulness has been so uniform that his word is true and faithful even from the beginning to the ending.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause ;  
and my heart hath been afraid at thy word.

162 I have rejoiced at thy word, as one that  
bringeth forth much pillage.

163 I have hated and abhorred deceit ; and I  
have loved thy law.

164 Seven times a-day have I praised thee, by  
reason of the judgments of thy righteousness.

165 Much peace have they that love thy law : and there is no stumbling-block for them.

166 Lord, I have waited for thy welfare, and I have kept thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I have loved them exceedingly.

198 I have kept thy commandments and testimonies : for all my ways are in thy sight.

161 *Princes have persecuted, &c.*] He relates that in his sore and grievous temptation he was held back by the fear of God, so that he desired to attempt nothing that was unbeseeming a godly man. For we are prone to fall into despair, when princes, who are armed with might to overwhelm us, are displeased with us and work us trouble. In addition to this is the shamefulness of the thing, that whereas they ought to be as bucklers to defend us, they turn their strength to our hurt. Nay rather, when afflicted men are stricken by those in high places, they after a sort believe that God's hand is against them. Also the case of the prophet was peculiar, when he had to encounter the heads of the chosen people, whom God had placed in such honourable posts that they were the pillars of the church. Some expound it more restrictedly, that David followed Christ's exhortation; namely, *Fear not them that kill but the body : I will shew ye of whom ye ought to be afraid : fear God, who, after he hath killed the body, is able to cast the soul into hell fire ;* Matt. x. 28: which, though it were not yet uttered by Christ's mouth, was such as might well be fixed in the hearts of all the godly. Therefore in their opinion the meaning is, that the prophet was not induced to cast off the fear of God for any threatenings or terrors. But he extends this commendation of his own constancy yet further. Well known is this exhortation of Isaiah, viii. 12, *Be not afraid at their terribleness ; but the Lord of hosts let him be your fear and abashment.* The prophet shews there generally with what weapons the faithful must be armed to vanquish all the assaults of the world ; that is, they not only must stand in awe of God, but also believe that he will always be the maintainer of their welfare, so that they may cast all their cares upon him. For so will it come to pass, that they shall hold themselves content with his defence alone, and not depart from him to practise any schemes of their own. So also in this place, although the prophet, being oppressed by the wrongful violence of

princes, were a sad spectacle, yet denies he that he yielded ; saying that he considered what was lawful for him to do, and emulated not their wicked practices by repelling craft with craft, and violence with violence. For with reference to the present circumstance, *to be afraid at God's word*, is to restrain a man's self, and to attempt nothing that is unlawful. I have told you heretofore that the adverb **בְּחֵפֶז**, or *freely*, is added for the purpose of amplification, because the temptation was so much the harder, in that the tyrants assailed a harmless person for no cause, but only from their own wicked lust. For we know that glorious natures are more easily excited to anger when such as he is assaulted, who has provoked no man. It was therefore a notable proof of self-control in the prophet to bridle himself by God's word, that he might not contend with evil-dealing, nor be so overcome with impatience as to fall from his vocation. Therefore let us learn to remain quiet, although princes tyrannously abuse the power that God hath committed to them, lest by our unquietness we break in upon the subordination that ought to be preserved.

162 *I have rejoiced, &c.*] We know that no gain brings greater joy than when conquerors become rich with the spoil of their enemies : for to the gain there is added glory of triumph, and the profit that comes on a sudden delights the more. This is the reason why David compares the knowledge of the heavenly doctrine which he had gotten with spoils rather than with other riches. For by these words he intimates that out of God's word he had gotten the greatest joy that could be, whereunto no gain, howsoever desirable, was able to come near. Whereby we gather that he was contented with God's word as though with the fulness of delight and perfect felicity. And no marvel if David resolved that a happy life in all its fulness was contained in God's word, wherein he knew the treasure of eternal life was enclosed and offered to him by free adoption. In the third verse of this eight he declares better what I touched upon erewhile, namely, that he was cleansed from faulty affections to the end he might yield the law its due honour and estimation. And as we have had almost the same sentence in another place, I will but briefly touch upon the reason why the prophet says first that *he hated deceit* ere he speak of his loving and embracing of the law. For inasmuch as we know that hypocrisy is bred by nature in the hearts of all men, and that they are naturally given to vanity and deceitfulness, we must labour earnestly to purge our hearts, that the love of the law may reign there. Now if the hating and abhorring of falsehood be the beginning of a

good life, and the first point of righteousness, it follows that nothing is more excellent than integrity or uprightness, for all virtues vanish away if that hold not the first place. Neither is it for nought that *abhorring* is joined with *hating*, that we may know that it is not enough to hate deceit after a common manner, unless God's children be even at deadly feud with it. Now if the love of the law and the hating of deceit are things inseparable, it follows that as many as are not instructed in God's school are infected with guile and hypocrisy. By *seven times a-day*, the prophet means that he is continually or very often occupied in setting forth God's praises; like as in Proverbs, xxiv. 16, the righteous man is said to fall seven times a-day, when he falls oftentimes into sundry temptations. And forasmuch as God's judgments are eachwhere taken for the punishments that he layeth upon wickedness, and sometimes also are referred to his general providence, by which he governeth the world. some are of opinion that the prophet praises God for avouching his justice so manifestly, as well in punishing wickedness, as in the general governance of the world, But I agree with others rather, who refer them to his doctrine; not that I dislike the former exposition, but because in this Psalm the prophet stands peculiarly upon the commendation of God's law. The effect therefore is, that David, being continually occupied in the considering of God's law, found so great perfection of justice and wisdom therein, that from time to time he was fain to burst out into praise and thanksgiving. And this diligence in praising God shews that David not only spoke reverently and honourably of the law, but also accounted it an incomparable benefit to mankind. For it was not only admiration that enforced him to praise God, but it was also heartfelt thankfulness, because he saw there could no more excellent a thing be given to man than to be renewed to blessed and eternal life by the incorruptible seed of the heavenly doctrine. Notwithstanding, of all those to whom God offereth this treasure, scarcely one in a hundred takes even common pains to give God thanks. But there reigns such vile ingratitude everywhere in the world, that some scornfully reject the heavenly doctrine, some refuse it, and others bark at it and growl if there be anything in it that does not please them.

165 *Much peace have, &c.*] If we take *peace* for a happy state of life, according as the Hebrews employ it often in that sense, then the word *stumbling-block* will be put correspondently for *adversity*; as if it had been said, that such as love the law of God shall have a prosperous



course, and stand unmoved though the whole world should fall. But this other interpretation will apply equally well, namely, that they have much peace, and that, because, being persuaded that they themselves please God, and their life also, they rest calmly on a good conscience. For we know that this serenity of mind, *εὐθυμία*, is worthily reckoned the first point of blessed life; namely, when being at one with God, we live quietly, and his fatherly favour beams in our hearts. And justly does the prophet avouch that we attain this peace by the law of God: for whosoever depends upon anything else, shall tremble from time to time at every little blast. If this sense be approved, then will the word *stumbling-block*, in the second member, signify all perturbations of mind, wherewith they are piteously troubled and vexed who lean not upon God's word, but are impelled either by their own lust, or by other men's caprice. Nevertheless, whichever of these two ways we interpret the said words, *peace* and *stumbling-block*, the prophet's meaning will remain the same; that is, that they are miserable who do not devote themselves to God; because, though they like well of themselves for a time, yet many stumbling-blocks lie in their way, to drive them suddenly out of their course. And from the term *love*, we gather that this peace is not purchased by slavish observance of the law, but is obtained by faith. For the law has no sweetness to allure us to it, unless it present to us God as our father, and quiet our minds with assurance of eternal salvation. Contrariwise, all worldlings and despisers of God are justly punished by their own stubbornness and depravity: for they are each of them their own executioners; and the fiercer they are against God's word, the sorer are they tormented, until they bring themselves to utter destruction. And, though the godly also have their peculiar distresses, yet their inward comfort either wipes away all sorrow, or lifts them over all stumbling-blocks, or else sustains them so that they faint not.

166 *Lord, I have waited, &c.*] Not without cause does the prophet often inculcate this sentence, which is in all men's mouths, because nothing is easier than to yield to God the praise and office of saving; whereas, there is scarcely one example of steadfast hope to be met with in the whole world, when men come to wrestle any long time with temptations. And from the order of the words we gather that, in order that a man may keep himself in the fear of God and the love of his law, he must first seek safety in God. For if the belief of grace be taken away, or patience once shaken off, harassed by conflicting impulses, we

lose all remembrance of godliness. And therefore the chief virtue of the faithful, is their sufferance of the cross and mortification, whereby they submit themselves calmly unto God. For so long as no adversity happens to us hypocrites, we also seem properly disposed to praise God. Furthermore, there are other reasons why it behoves us to give our minds to God's saving health, if we desire to frame our life aright. For if we are tied to the enticements of the world, we shall be dissolved. And we see that the greater part fail, because it is a hard matter to believe assuredly that welfare is not to be hoped for elsewhere than in God's free grace. Wherefore, that we may worship God without ceasing, faith must needs first light us on our way. Then must patience come and accompany it, to cherish in us the love of righteousness. For, as I have said, our alacrity in going forward springs herefrom; that we can make up our minds to suffer our salvation to lie hid in God's bosom, and not doubt but he will be a faithful rewarder of all such as seek him, although he withdraw his favour from our eyes. This doctrine he confirms with other words in the next verse, saying that he keeps God's testimonies with all his heart. For by the name of *soul*, he expresses more forcibly that he had held the doctrine of the law treasured up deeply, and in the inmost recess of his heart. The cause of this so diligent keeping is, the singular love of it, which he adds. For he that obeys the law of necessity and slavishly, is so far from receiving it to be safely kept in the secret habitation of the heart, that he would fain it were removed far away.

168 *I have kept, &c.*] What he had spoken with greater vehemence before, he repeats now more simply, adding thereunto a reason: though that brevity consists not in the whole cast of the sentence, but in the word *soul* alone, which he now omits. By the way, to *commandments* he joins *testimonies*, that he may shew more plainly, that he not only treats of the rule of living well, but also comprehends the whole covenant of salvation. And truly the doctrine of the law could not be so sweet and amiable for shewing what is right, if it did not also set forth the free favour of God. The reason the prophet assigns, tends to this, that, as he knew that nothing is hidden from God, the same was as good as a bridle to him in the maintenance of godliness. For, except we live as it were in God's sight, the wantonness of the flesh quickly carries us away in all directions. The meaning also may be this; that he made God the umpire and judge of his life: for the scripture says that they *walk in the sight of God*, who willingly refer all their doings to him, and, as it were withdrawing themselves from the eyes of men,

cite themselves to his judgment-seat. In thiswise he gives us to understand that he had done the best he could, not only to be clear from all fault and blame before men, but also to offer his heart sound and sincere to God. Whichever of these senses you choose, the prophet avouches that God's law is never observed aright till we consider that we have to deal with God, the searcher of hearts, from whose eyes nothing is hidden. It may also be a form of protestation; as if he had said, Lord, thou art the best witness how faithfully I have kept thy law, for nothing is hidden from thee. But he seems rather to have pointed out this principle of holy conversation; namely, that he had consecrated his life to God, and always had his thoughts intently occupied in beholding him.

169 Let my cry come before thy face, O Lord; give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my prayer come into thy sight; deliver me according to thy word.

171 My lips shall speak praise, when thou shalt have taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness.

173 Let thy hand be to help me; for I have chosen thy commandments.

174 I have longed for thy welfare, O Lord; and thy law is my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments succour me.

176 I have strayed like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I have not forgotten thy statutes.

169 *Let my cry, &c.*] He repeats that which we have seen already, namely, that his chief desire, and what urges most, considering everything else as secondary, is that he may profit in God's law. For by the word *cry* he denotes an earnestness, as if he should say, the care which touched him chiefly, and the longing wherewith he was most inflamed, even as it was reasonable and right, the light of understanding whereby we excel the brute beasts, and approach nearest to God, should be preferred before all earthly commodities. However, the portion, *according to thy word*, admits a two-fold sense; and some expound it as if David should wish to have his mind framed according to the appointment of God's

word, that he might be wise only according to the doctrine of the law. And this sense would not be inapplicable, were it not that in the next verse these words, *deliver me according to thy word*, present an impediment to it. But as I have no doubt that these two senses agree with each other, though the more plausible of the two is this, that David prays to be made wise according to the rule of the law, yet I rather incline to the other sense, namely, that he desires to be endued with understanding according as God had promised. And we know that of all the things which he promiseth most bounteously to his servants, this is deservedly the chief, that being enlightened with his Spirit they should excel in true and sound wisdom. And manifold is the profitableness of this lesson: for first we are taught that nothing is more to be desired than that God should guide us with his light, lest we might become like brute beasts; secondly, that it is the peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost: for it had been fondness for David to have asked that which had been implanted in him by nature, or which he might have attained to by his own effort. Thirdly, comes that which I said concerning the promise, that the faithful should not hesitate to offer themselves to God to be enlightened by him, who assureth them that he will be the guide of the blind, and refuseth not to be a master and teacher of the little ones.

170 *Let my prayer come, &c.*] After he has made his petition for right understanding, now he calls upon God for deliverance, whereby he acknowledges himself to be continually in many dangers, out of which he has none other means of escape except God stretch out his hand from heaven. We know, indeed, that the prophet, as often as he was driven to any necessity, called upon God for help: but, as he speaks indefinitely, I doubt not but that by commending his life generally to the protection of God, he reflects that he is kept in on every side by innumerable deaths if God be not his continual deliverer. But this is an inestimable comfort, that God assureth us that his help shall always be ready and at hand for us in all dangers.

171 *My lips shall speak, &c.*] Now he shews, in a different way from that in the last verse, how highly he esteemed it to be admitted among God's disciples, and to profit aright in his school; namely, because he will hasten to return thanks to God with fluent tongue. For the word *וַיִּשְׁבַּח*, which he uses, is a metaphor taken from the bubbling up of fountains, and therefore it signifies not simply to speak, but to pour forth a speech plentifully. Therefore, as erewhile he shewed the earnestness of his desire by praying, so now he

says that his rejoicing shall be a witness that he wishes nothing more than to be thoroughly imbued with the heavenly doctrine. And again he maintains that the rule of true wisdom is to submit ourselves to God's word, and not to follow our own imaginations; and also that God should open our understanding and subdue it to his obedience. For the prophet here joins both of them together; namely, that when God hath set his law before us for us to learn out of it whatsoever is profitable to be known to salvation, he also becomes our inward schoolmaster; because it were not enough to have our ears stricken with the outward sound unless God enlightened our minds with the spirit of understanding, and corrected our hardness with the spirit of teachableness. And as the labour of teachers is in vain until it be made effectual, so also it is to be noted that such as are taught of God in deed, are not carried away from the law and the scriptures by secret revelations, as some fanatics are who think that they linger in the mere elements of instruction, if they may not fly away after their own forgeries, trampling God's word disdainfully under their feet. In the fourth verse of this eighth he says that when he shall have profited in God's law he will also employ his labour in teaching others. Truly this order is to be held, that the doctrine first take root in our own hearts before we utter it to others. Nevertheless, each man according to the measure of his faith ought to make his brethren partakers of that which he has received, that the doctrine be not buried whose use and fruit God will have set forth to the common edifying of the church. Also there is added this reason, because it is meet that all the godly should be provoked to set forth the law of God; that is, because by this means righteousness is spread abroad through the whole world. For when the prophet adorns God's precepts with the title of *righteousness*, he does not simply approve them, but he indirectly insinuates that until this rule bear sway in guiding mankind, the whole world is one scene of melancholy and horrible confusion. Notwithstanding, let the readers judge whether the word *answer*, or *witness*, which ענה properly signifies, agree not better with the present place; so that the sense may be, My tongue shall bear witness, or answer to thy word, because the true knowledge of righteousness is not to be sought elsewhere: but then the letter ל would be to be supplied in the word אמרתך.

173 *Let thy hand, &c.*] Because he has devoted himself to the doctrine of the law, he requires to have God's hand to be his helper. Furthermore, by these words he declares that such as yield themselves to the governance of God's

word, have need of his help continually. And certainly, the more sincerely any man applies himself to well-doing, the more ways does Satan trouble him, yea, and the more adversaries molest him on every side. But when God seeth them that have once embraced his doctrine continue steadfast in their purpose, he is so much the readier to help them. And by the word *choose* he has expressed that nothing could prevent him from devoting himself to God's law. For there is no man that shall set his mind upon the love of the law without great contention, inasmuch as the unhallowed affections of the flesh call off the thoughts of every man to a variety of objects. This *choosing*, then, whereof mention is made, shews that it is not for lack of skill, or through any unadvised zeal that the children of God covet above all things the heavenly doctrine; but that as men's manners are variable, and they feel the various impulses of the flesh, they purposely subdue their mind to the service of God.

174 *I have longed, &c.*] Though all men wish things to go well with them, and no man also flatly refuses God's favour; yet is the choice of happy life so confused and uncertain, that scarce one in a hundred aspires to Godward. For whereas some are carried away with their own ambition, some possessed with covetousness, and some burn with lust, the further they recede from God, the better they imagine they shall fare. Finally, according as each man is desirous to be safe, so much the more does he invite God's displeasure in seeking means at random. The Hebrew construction also denotes a constancy of desire; for literally he says, *he had sued for the welfare of God*. Afterwards, he expresses the manner of patient suing for welfare; that is, when we seek for comfort and relief of all maladies out of God's word: for whosoever does not comfort himself with the assurance of promised salvation, shall quail at every slight assault. Therefore lest the prophet might turn away his thoughts from hoping for the salvation of God, he holds himself wisely within the doctrine of the law.

175 *Let my soul live, &c.*] As the verbs in the Hebrew are of the future tense, the sentence might be resolved thus; Lord, when thou shalt have bestowed life upon me, I will endeavour to shew myself thankful in setting forth thy praises. If this sense be approved, then it will be a kind of rejoicing, wherein the prophet, upon trust of God's promises, confidently proclaims that his life shall be preserved. And doubtless, although our life be hidden under the shadow of death, yet may we boast that it is safe, because the



keeper thereof is faithful; according also as this affiance springs out of God's quickening grace offered us in his word. Nevertheless, as the majority of interpreters translate the words in the mood of wishing, let us follow that which is most received; that is, that David, in suing to have his life prolonged, does also therewith shew the end to which he desires to live; namely, that he may exercise himself in setting forth God's praises: like as in Psalm cxv. 18, it has been said, *we that shall be alive, shall praise the Lord*. In the second member it were hard to understand *judgments*, of the commandments, to which it belongs not properly to give help. It seems then, that because the prophet perceived himself in hazard of innumerable mischiefs, even as the faithful in this world are fain to dwell as sheep among wolves, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, he calls upon God for defence, that by the secret bridle of his providence, he would restrain all the ungodly from doing him harm. And when things are tumbled up and down in the world, and our welfare is imperilled amid sundry and manifold storms, it is a very profitable doctrine to lift up our eyes to God's judgments, and to seek remedy from them. As, however, in this Psalm the word *judgments* is commonly referred to God's commandments, we may properly translate this place so that the prophet should attribute the office and charge of helping to God's word, because he doth not feed us with delusive promises, but confirmeth and ratifieth his word as often as need be, with the palpable working of his hand. Thus it will be a singular commendation to advance the efficacy of God's word, that the prophet calls the law of God to his help. If any one prefer to expound it of the keeping of the law, I will not oppose him; as if the prophet should say, Lord, let the uprightness which I have observed, and the endeavour that I have employed in keeping thy commandments, be a defence for me.

176 *I have strayed, &c.*] He confesses not his sins here, as many erroneously suppose, as if he had been drawn into the traps of Satan; for it is repugnant to the second member, where he denies that he had forgotten God's law. And it is a trumpery solution, to say that he was a stray sheep before the time of his calling, and that afterwards he was given to godliness; or that in straying he was withheld by some godly affection, that he did not utterly cast off the fear of God; for it is certain that in both the members the same thing is referred to. Again, it is easy to gather that the prophet speaks adversatively; that is to say, that though he had strayed like a lost sheep, yet forgetfulness of the law

had never come over him. Therefore, in my judgment, he says he had strayed because, being chased by the force and violence of his enemies, he conveyed himself tremblingly from place to place, to find some covert to hide him in. We know for certain that David was so hunted, that he could nowhere find a quiet place of exile. Wherefore this similitude would apply to him most fitly, because being chased and driven away, still he never swerved from God's law. Moreover, as the wolves pursued him everywhere, he desires God to gather him up, and to give him a quiet and safe abiding-place, that he may at length cease from wandering. And this was the best ground of confidence that he would obtain his request: that though goaded by manifold wrongs he never swerved from the fear of God; which, however, ought to be referred to the tenour of his life rather than to special acts, as they term it. For although for a time he was lost to all sense in his adultery, yet is it certain that in his reverses he was restrained by godly fortitude, so that he followed after righteousness perseveringly.

## PSALM CXX.

*If we take David to have been the author of this Psalm, which is probable, he declares how devoutly he had prayed at such time as he wandered from place to place, to escape the cruelty of Saul. And most of all, he complains of wicked informers, who charged him unjustly with false slanders, when he had done no such thing as they charged him with. But if the other conjecture be more approved, then will it be a simple and general complaint against false reports. This Psalm, and the next fourteen following, are called Psalms of Degrees: but in what respect, it is not agreed upon, even among the Hebrew doctors. Some surmise that there were fifteen steps to the part of the temple appointed for the men; and that the women stayed beneath: but it is an absurd and vague conjecture, and we know what license the Jews allow themselves in dark cases, to feign what they list. Some understand this going up, to be their return from the captivity of Babylon; which is altogether forced. For it is manifest that the greater part of them were composed either by David, or Solomon; and it is easy to gather from the contents of them, that as many of them as were composed by David, were wont to be sung in the temple while he was yet alive. Others think the ascents are tones in modulation: and there are some who affirm that they were the beginning of a ditty. Now though I do not trouble myself much about a matter which is of small importance, yet I am inclined to admit the conjecture, that the title was given from higher singing. For it is derived from the verb צלה, which means 'to go up,' and therefore I willingly receive it that distinct gradations in modulation are denoted by it.*

## [A Song of Degrees.]

1 I called to the Lord in my distress, and he answered me.

2 Lord, deliver my soul from the lip of falsehood, and from the tongue of deceit.

3 What shall the tongue of deceit give thee, and what shall it avail thee?

4 The sharp arrows of a strong man, with coals of junipers.

1 *I called to the Lord, &c.*] The author's name is not, indeed, annexed, but the texture of the language throughout, sets before us an exact image of David: therefore, although I dare avouch nothing for a certainty, yet do I rather give my

consent that this Psalm was made by him. Neither will it be amiss, in my judgment, just to expound it as if his name were expressed. This, then, being granted, though David in declaring that the Lord had heard him, in this verse gives thanks, yet his chief purpose was to declare, under the form of complaint, how wickedly and cruelly Saul's flatterers bent all their study and endeavour to his destruction. In the first place, however, he premises with reference to his own thankfulness, that he had not called upon God in vain, in order that by his own example he might hearten others to boldness in praying, especially when they are distressed with adversity. For though men have need of God's help every moment, yet is there no time more convenient to seek him, than when some extraordinary danger presses. Therefore, the circumstance that he was heard when, forced by tribulation, he betook himself to the protection of God, is to be noted.

2 *Lord, deliver, &c.*] Now he sets down the character of his affliction; namely, that he was oppressed with false accusations. Further, while charging his enemies with lying and forgery he asserts his innocence of the crimes they falsely imputed to him. His complaint, therefore, tends to this end, that inasmuch as he knows himself clear from all fault, it is against all law, human and divine, that he should be assailed by reprobates and brought into hatred, having done nothing to deserve it. And whereas deceitful tongues assault honest and simple men in two ways; namely, either in compassing them by wiles and snares, or by wounding their fair fame, the prophet complains here of the second kind only. Now if a prophet, endued with so great virtue, and clear from all opprobrious stigma, yea, and far removed from all fault, was, nevertheless, assailed with slander, what wonder is it if the children of God at this day, labour under the odium of falsely imputed guilt, and when they have endeavoured to do well, are yet ill reported of? Besides, it is quite clear that since they have the devil their enemy, they must needs be burdened with his lies. Nay, we see that railing tongues spared not even the Son of God. Wherefore it becomes us to bear it the more patiently, if reprobates traduce us undeservedly. For it is certain that here is described the common lot of the whole church.

3 *What shall the tongue, &c.*] The prophet enhances the malice of his enemies, in that their wicked lust drove them to railing, even where there was no prospect of advantage. And yet he seems to go further, that is, that after they have flushed out all the poison of their slanderous reports, yet shall their attempts be in vain, and ineffectual. Therefore,

as God maintaineth the innocence of his servants, David, upon trust of that hope, rises up against them with heroic boldness, as though about to triumph over the whole rout of calumniators, telling them to their shame, that they do but betray an impotent passion for slander; for when they have done their worst, God shall hurl it back upon their own heads. And to assuage the grief of all the godly, when slanderers wrongfully impeach their good name, he gives them this comfort, that they shall nothing avail, because the Lord will disappoint their hope.

4 *The sharp arrows, &c.*] The malice of such as trouble simple and harmless souls with their slanders, he amplifies in another respect; namely, that they shoot out their slanderous reports as if a man should transfix his neighbour with an arrow, and that their slanders are like coals of juniper, which pierce more effectually, and burn more than those of other wood. The effect is, that the tongues of slanderers are inflamed with fiery heat, and dipped as it were in deadly poison, and therefore are less excusable, in that their desire of such deadly mischief proceeds not upon hope of reward. And as the prophet records nothing here but what he had had experience of; if he, and such as he, were doomed to be shot through with the arrows of falsehood, and to be as it were burnt up with coals, there is no reason why we should wonder, if even the most eminent of God's servants be now exercised after the same manner.

5 Woe is me, that I have been a wayfarer in Mesech, and have dwelled among the tents of Kedar!

6 My soul hath dwelled long with the hater of peace.

7 I have sought peace: and, while I speak, they bent themselves to war.

5 *Woe is me, &c.*] He makes his moan that he should be driven to linger among froward men, as if some wretched person should be compelled to spend his life in sorrowful exile. We know that the Mesechites and Kedarenes were Eastern people; the former of which derived their original from Japhet, as Moses declares in Gen. x. 2; and the others were descended from a son of Ishmael. For to understand it of the Heturians, is altogether against reason, and void of all colour of likelihood. Some will have the word Mesech to be an appellative noun; and because the word מִשַּׁח signifies *to draw*; they think that the prophet bewails his continual banishment, which he saw to be prolonged

without end. But immediately after, he adds *Kedar*, by which name it is certain the Ishmaelites are denoted, I doubt not but that by *Mesech* he designates the Arabians who border upon them. If any one think that the Mesechites have obtained that name from their cunning in shooting, I will not resist him, provided we agree upon this point, that the prophet expresses the irksomeness of an uncomfortable and annoying residence, as if he were banished into a country of robbers. For it is to be understood, that though he name the Arabians, he speaks metaphorically of his own countrymen, as in another place he calls the corrupt and degenerate Jews, Gentiles. But here, to wound his enemies the more severely, he purposely selected savage and barbarous nations, whose horrible cruelty was known to the Jews. And by these words we are taught that there is scarcely any more poignant misery to God's children, then when by their godly and harmless conversation, they cannot, however, escape venomous slanders. Also it is to be noted, that being in his own country, he was but as a sojourner, because nothing grieved him more than to company with the wicked. Now we gather hence, that nothing is more detestable to God, by whose Spirit he spoke, than the false accusations which mar the beauty of God's church with hideous havoc, so that it differs in a manner nothing from the dens of thieves, or places of infamous notoriety, for their barbarous savageness. Now if it converts their habitation into a miserable exile to God's children when the innocence of good men is borne down by calumnious falsehood, how should they willingly and without bitterest sorrow of heart, abide in a place where God's holy name is shamefully defiled with horrible blasphemies, and his truth darkened with traitorous lies? David cries out, *woe is me*, because he receives unworthy reward of his loving-kindness at the hands of false brethren. Since, therefore, at this day, in the papacy, religion is defiled with all manner of reproaches, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God subjected to grossest mockeries; surely, those that have any feeling of godliness in them, will not be able to be prostrate amid such pollutions without unspeakable anguish.

6 *My soul hath dwelled long, &c.*] Now he shews, without a figure, who they are that he just now noted indirectly by the terms Mesechites and Kedarenes; namely, the disguised and false-hearted Israelites that had fallen away from the holy fathers. And he says they are *haters of peace*, because they wilfully make war upon the good and unoffending; even as presently after he adds, that he had a forward mind



to seek peace, or rather that he was wholly addicted to peace, and had essayed all the means that could be to win their favour, but their implacable cruelty drove them to do him mischief. When he says *I peace*, it is an abrupt but not obscure intimation, that there had no injury proceeded from him, that could give them occasion of hatred; as if he should say there had been peace on his behalf. He goes even further; namely, that he had done his endeavour to pacify their resentment, and to bring them to agreement: for *to speak*, imports as much as to offer terms of peace in a spirit of gentleness, or to treat of reconciliation: whereby it appears the better how truculent was the insolence of David's enemies, that disdained to come even to conference with a man that had deserved well at their hands, and who had never hurt them. And we are taught by David's example, that it is not enough for the faithful to abstain from doing harm, unless they endeavour also to allure men, and to win them to benevolence by gentleness. And if their moderation and upright behaviour be rejected, let them patiently tarry till the avenger shew himself from heaven. But let us bear in mind that the weariness of delay must be endured, if God do not at once reach out his hand; even as we see how David in this Psalm gives thanks to God for his deliverance, and yet bewails his long oppression as one worn out with languishing.

## PSALM CXXI.

*This Psalm, in order to exhort the faithful to trust cheerfully in God's help, and teach them to fly to his protection, first affirms that whithersoever we turn our eyes, salvation is not to be found anywhere else; and secondly, extols, with singular commendation, God's fatherly care in defending the faithful.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 I will lift up mine eyes to the mountains, from whence my help shall come.

2 My help is from the Lord, who hath made both heaven and earth.

1 *I will lift up mine eyes, &c.*] The prophet, whosoever he is, seems, in the opening of the Psalm, to take upon him the person of an unbelieving man: for like as God preventeth the faithful with his blessings, and meeteth them of his own accord, so also do they suddenly cast their eyes

upon him. What means, then, this vague gazing of the prophet, when he rolls his eyes about to sundry places, as though faith directed him not to God? I answer, that the thoughts of the godly are never so fully possessed by God's word, but that in their first impulse they are carried away to allurements: especially at such time as dangers provoke us, or when we are shaken with sore temptations: it is scarce possible, so prone are we to the earthward, but that we must be moved with the enticements that present themselves to us, until our minds put a bridle upon themselves, and rein in themselves to God. Nevertheless, the sentence may be expounded conditionally; as if the prophet should say, whatsoever we think of them, all the hopes that draw us away from the one God, are transient and delusive. Thus the prophet would not shew what he debated with himself, or what he intended to do, but only that they lose their labour, who, setting God aside, gaze about far-afield, and busily seek remedies in long and devious circuities. No doubt he sets forth in his own person the malady whereof all mankind are sick: yet it will be by no means absurd to suppose that he spoke according to his own feeling: for we know that this vanity is bred in all of us by nature; namely, that when smitten with any fears, we turn our eyes hither and thither, till, being brought back from the mazes of error, faith direct us to the one God. For the only thing wherein we differ from the unbelievers is this, that although we are all prone to admit deceits and credulous of impostures, Satan bewitches unbelievers with his sorceries, but God correcteth the default of our nature, and suffereth us not to wander far. Surely the prophet's meaning is nothing doubtful; namely, that though all the mightiest helps in the world offer themselves to us, yet must we not seek any safety at all without God; or rather, when men have long wearied themselves in hunting for remedies on all sides, they will at length find by experience that there is no assured help but in God: for by the *mountains*, he betokens whatsoever is high or excellent in earth; as if he should say, although all the gloriousness of the world smile upon us, yet is such favour to be accounted as nothing. But these two verses must be read jointly, thus; When I shall have lifted up mine eyes to the mountains, then shall I find by experience that they wander absurdly and unprofitably, until they are fastened upon God only. And herewith it is to be noted, that God is not in vain adorned with this title, that he is *the maker of heaven and earth*. For thereby is the unkindness of men tacitly glanced at, when they cannot rest contented on his power: for if they acknowledged him thoroughly as

the Creator, they would also be persuaded that, as the whole world is in his hand, and is ruled by his appointment, he is armed with immeasurable might. But now, because blind headiness hurries them another way, they defraud him of his right and pre-eminence. In this manner should we accommodate the attribute to the present case. The effect is, that whereas we are by nature over-diligent to seek relief and redress of our miseries, especially when there hangs over us any manifest peril, yet we foolishly run up and down through tortuous mazes, and therefore our understandings must be restrained, that they may not apply themselves to anything but God. And not amiss, in my judgment, some think that *לֹא* is put here for *לְיָ*, which signifies *above* or *upon*, so that the meaning would be, that however high men look, yet shall they find no safety at all anywhere but in God.

3 He shall not give thy foot to sliding : thy keeper shall not slumber.

4 Behold, the keeper of Israel shall not slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord is thy keeper ; the Lord is thy defence at thy right hand.

3 *He shall not give, &c.*] To call back the faithful, and to cut off all pretence for laying hold of the enticements that are wont to draw away the minds of the godly, whatsoever worldlings are wont to seek or to hope for from the world, the prophet here declares to be abundant and ready at hand for the faithful in God alone. And he not only attributes power to God, but also shews that he is so affectioned towards us, that he will make us thoroughly safe in all respects. For as often as God's power is extolled, many men have this exception in their mouth, that he can indeed if he list, but we are uncertain whether he will or no. God, therefore, is set forth to the faithful as their keeper, that they may rest securely upon his providence. For like as all godliness is extinguished by the Epicureans, who imagine that God hath no care at all of the world, even so they that imagine God to rule the world blindly, and believe not that he hath a peculiar care to cherish every one of the godly, leave men's minds in suspense, and also fluctuate in continual unquietness themselves. It is certain that earnest calling upon God shall never thrive, till the certainty of this keeping is thoroughly settled in our hearts. And he avouches God to be our keeper, that he may hold us up. The word *שׁוּמֵר* sig-

nifies as well *a sliding* or *falling*, as also *a trembling* and *staggering*. Now though it happen that the faithful oftentimes stagger, yea, and slide also, yet as God sustaineth them with his power, they are said to stand upright. And because among so many dangers as hang over our heads every moment, it is a hard matter to rid us of all anxiety and fear, the prophet testifies at the same time that God keepeth continual watch.

4 *Behold, the keeper, &c.*] That he may call back every one to the general covenant, he extends God's providence to the whole body of the church. For that each man may believe that God will be gracious to him, it behoves him to begin with the general covenant. But it would be an absurd expression, in other languages, to say, *he shall not slumber nor sleep*; for he should rather say, *he shall not sleep, no, nor slumber*: but while the Hebrews invert this order, they reason from the greater likelihood to the less. The meaning then is, that as God doth not at any time so much as slumber, we need not be afraid at all that anything may happen to us while he is asleep. Now we understand the prophet's purpose: for that he may persuade each person that God hath a peculiar care of him, he alleges what he hath promised to the whole people, and avouches God to be the keeper of his church, that out of this wellspring every man may convey a stream to himself. Therefore, speaking to every man severally, immediately after he repeats, *God is thy keeper*, verily lest any man might hesitate to apply that to his own use which belongs to all Israel. And God is called *a defence at our right hand*, that we may know that we need not to go far to seek God, but that he is at hand, or rather standeth by our side to defend us.

6 The sun shall not burn thee by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep thee from all evil: he will keep thy soul.

8 The Lord will hearken to thy going out, and to thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.

6 *The sun, &c.*] By these forms of speech he commends the fruit of God's ready help; and by the figure synecdoche, under one particular, he assures the faithful that they shall be safe from all adversities, because they are shielded with God's hand. Nevertheless, there is in it a metaphor also; for by the cold of the night and the heat of the day the prophet denotes any manner of inconvenience. The mean-

ing then is, that though the faithful may be subject to the miseries of human life as well as others be, yet is the shadow of God always by their side to shield them, that they may not feel any harm from them. Notwithstanding, he does not promise God's children such luxurious felicity that they shall be privileged from all trouble, but only assuages their grief with this solace, that as long as they are in God's favour they shall be safe from all deadly harm; even as he promises more manifestly in the next verses that God will in suchwise preserve his servants from all evils, as that he will keep their life in safety. And this indeed is general; but afterwards he comes down to the chief particulars of life.

8 *The Lord will preserve, &c.*] The meaning is, that whatsoever thou attempt or take in hand in all thy life shall go well and luckily. Now though God guide the plans of his servants with his Spirit, yet this place seems rather to be referred to prosperous issues. Nevertheless, if any one had rather extend it further, I raise no objection. It is enough for me to embrace what is incontrovertibly sure and sound; that is, that God will be a continual guide to his servants, so that stretching out his hand to them, he may lead them even from the beginning to the end, according to their heart's desire. Moreover, it is worth noting, why the prophet repeats so often what he had expressed plainly enough in one word, for such beating upon it seems superfluous. But if we weigh well how hard it is to correct our distrustfulness, we may gather that the prophet's standing upon the commendation of God's providence is not without good consideration. For how few yield so much honour to God as to think themselves assured in him, and to call upon him in their necessities and perils! Nay, even when we seem to have had the most perfect taste of what God's providence may avail us, as soon as a leaf but fall from a tree, we are alarmed as if he had quite forgotten us. Since, then, we are entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and are so ready to distrust, this passage tells us, that if a short sentence suffice us not, we may gather to us whatsoever is to be met withal in all parts of the scripture concerning God's providence; until this point of doctrine, namely, that God doth always keep watch for us, be thoroughly settled in our hearts, so that, content with his only defence, we may bid all the forgeries of the world farewell.

## PSALM CXXII.

*In this Psalm David congratulates himself and all the church, that at length God had appointed a rest for the ark of the covenant, and chosen a place where his name should be continually called upon. Afterwards, to encourage and hearten the faithful to honour the sanctuary, he declares briefly that the happy state of the people depends upon this point, that God hath chosen Jerusalem to be his royal seat, from whence he is minded to defend, maintain, and help his servants.*

[*David's Song of Degrees.*]

1 I was glad when they said to me, We will go into the house of the Lord.

2 Our feet shall be standing in thy gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is builded as a city, that is uniform in itself.

1 *I was glad, &c.*] God had often said by Moses, that the time should one day come, when his sanctuary should have a sure and stable abiding-place; and yet for all that, the ark of the Lord had been passed from place to place as it were in pilgrimage above a thousand years together. At length God revealed mount Sion to David, where he would have it settled, and a temple built to himself. Now as David himself embraced the promise of God with singular gladness, so he affirms that he rejoiced in the consent of the whole people thereto. This circumstance has not been weighed sufficiently heretofore, and therefore the interpreters have not translated it well, *I rejoiced with them that said unto me*. For not only the sense is thus obscured, but also utterly marred by the Greek translation and the Latin Vulgate, where it is set down neutrally, *I rejoiced in the things that were said unto me*. I grant, indeed, that word for word it is, *I rejoiced in them that said unto me*. But it is no new thing to translate the letter  $\Delta$  by the adverb of time, and so the context requires. For David declares himself to have been affected with a twofold joy; namely, that he saw the oracle, whereby mount Sion was chosen to the solemn service of God, received with universal obedience of all the people. By which example we are put in mind, that we ought to rejoice doubly when God by his Spirit not only frameth every one of us to the obedience of his word, but also bringeth others to it with



us, so that we may be all partakers of the same faith. We know how great the perverseness of man's nature is, inso-much that almost always the greater number murmur as often as God speaketh. Therefore there is offered to us no small cause of rejoicing, when all men subscribe to God with us. They that translate it, *with them that said unto me*, deduce this sense; I take delight in the company of them that allure me to the service of God, and offer themselves to accompany me, that we may go to the sanctuary together. But by the second verse it will appear more evidently, that the gladness which he speaks of, was conceived upon this, that he saw the people, with forward obedience of faith, consent to the heavenly oracle for the lawful and steadfast placing of the ark of the covenant. For presently there follows,

2 *Our feet shall be standing, &c.*] Indeed the verb is of the preter tense, which may be suitably kept still. But as it imports little to the effect of the matter, I made no conscience to give the readers their free choice. For David rehearses the common voice of all the godly, that they should at length set sure footing in Jerusalem, because it was God's will to fix his sanctuary there, which heretofore had been removed to sundry places of sojourn from time to time. But by such pilgrimage of the ark God put his people in mind that he had not made Moses speak in vain what I touched upon just now: so, then, as often as the ark of the covenant was conveyed from one place to another, God stirred up the desires of his servants to sue for a sure abiding-place for it. Moreover, the sure abiding-place which we spoke of, was a matter of no small importance. For as, while the ark wandered, the people's faith hung in suspense, so, after God had chosen a fixed resting-place, he testified more certainly, that he would be a continual preserver of his people. It is no marvel therefore though the faithful declare with thanksgiving that their feet shall henceforth stand steadfast in the gates of Jerusalem, whereas heretofore they were wont to run up and down. True, the ark dwelled a long time in Shiloh: but as God had made no promise concerning that place there could not be any settledness. Again; because, as we shall see in Psalm cxxxii. 14, it was said of mount Sion, *This is my resting-place for ever and ever*, the faithful, grounding themselves upon that promise, confidently boast that their feet shall hereafter be at rest and stand fast. Now since that Christ, *in whom dwelleth the fulness of the godhead*, Col. ii. 9, and *who is our true Immanuel*, Isaiah vii. 14, abideth among us, he ministers occasion of more abundant joy to us. Wherefore, unthankful and senseless are we if this promise, *I am with you unto the end of the world*, Matt.

xxviii, 20, ravish us not with exceeding joy, especially if we see it received with common consent. For that which I cited just now concerning the resting of the Lord, is at length accomplished in the person of Christ, as is apparent by Isaiah, xi. 10, *His rest shall be glory*. In which place Isaiah speaks not of Christ's burial, as some interpreters falsely imagine, but of the future excellence of the church.

3 *Jerusalem is builded, &c.*] Here David begins to celebrate the praises of Jerusalem, and that in order that the people should continue steadfastly in their obedience. For it deeply concerned the godly not to have their minds drawn away to different points, but to have them settled on that city which was the bond of holy unity. And we know that it was the beginning of melancholy havoc when the people were divided into two bodies. No marvel, therefore, that David so earnestly commends the place that was chosen by God. For he knew that the welfare of the church depended upon the children of Abraham's pure worshipping of God there, according to the appointment of the law, and, next to that, upon their acknowledging the royal seat which the same God had set up there by his own ordinance. When he says that Jerusalem is built like a city, it is not referred only to the walls, or towers, or ditches, but chiefly to the civil polity; although I confess he alludes to the ancient state of it. Indeed Salem had been a famous town even from the beginning. But since the time that God's will was to have it the head of the realm, it changed its face, and, after a sort, even its nature, so that it never began to deserve the name of a well-compacted city indeed, till then. At first sight it may seem frigid to say that Jerusalem is called a city: but it is to be noted, that it is set down as the paragon of the whole earth, which all others emulate in vain. For truly David suffered all other cities to remain in their former state, but he raised Jerusalem aloft, that she might stand conspicuous above all, according as we see Isaiah, ii. 2, speaks of mount Sion, that it shall be higher than all other hills. The prophet, to magnify this little hill, brings down all the highest mountains of the world, lest they might dim the glory of it. So also now, David says that Jerusalem is compacted as a city, that the faithful should not gaze about them, but hold themselves contented with the city which is chosen of God, because they shall nowhere find her match. And after he has commanded other cities to stoop, he shews the excellence of Jerusalem in few words; namely, that it is uniformly built, or aptly and harmoniously knit together in all parts of it. Some take it without a figure, that her citizens are at unity and peace among themselves. Never-

theless, I object not, that the peaceable state of the city should be described by a similitude. Therefore the mutual union that reigns among her citizens, and by which they are cemented together, is compared to buildings uniformly matched with goodly workmanship, where there is nothing incomplete, no chasm, or disunion; but, throughout, one harmonious correspondence. Further, David teaches that the church cannot stand in safety unless there is unanimity in it, and unless, joined together in faith and charity, it cultivate a holy unity.

4 Thither went up the tribes of God for a witness unto Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.

5 For there were thrones set to judgment, even the thrones of the house of David.

4 *Thither went up, &c.*] David here adorns Jerusalem with two titles: namely, that it is the holy and lawful place wherein to call upon God's name; and also, that it is the royal seat from whence the whole realm must seek justice. We know that all our welfare consists in these two points: that Christ is given us to be our priest, and set over us as our king to govern us. This, God shewed under figures to the people of old time. For the sanctuary established upon mount Sion held the people in the belief of Christ's spiritual priesthood: and there was also an image of his kingdom set before their eyes in David. Therefore, in the former place, he says that God's tribes or kindreds shall come thither: and presently after he adds, that the seat of judgment is settled there for him and his posterity to sit in. We know why God, then, would there should be but one temple and one altar; namely, lest the people should fall away to sundry superstitions. David, therefore, declares that this place was appointed by the voice of God, for all his kindreds, or for the twelve tribes, to resort to from all quarters. And to express more plainly how greatly it was for their behoof to have the pure and lawful service of God preserved, he says it is for *a witness* to them. The original of this word is the verb *עָדָה*, which signifies *to bear witness*, or *covenant*. And here is betokened the mutual witnessing or covenanting between God and the people: as if the prophet should say, the tribes should not come thither at a venture, because their fancy led them, but because God calleth them thither with his own mouth. The effect, therefore, is, that the holy assemblies, which shall be kept at Jerusalem, shall not be empty and trifling, because God hath agreed with his people

upon a fixed place: whereby we gather, that the true temple of God is not accounted so but for the doctrine's sake. As concerning the time of David, as God had adopted the ancient people, and would have them exercised in the outward worship of his name, he appointed them a rule, from which it was not lawful for them to deviate. And so the faithful were not drawn to mount Sion foolishly, or through an unadvised zeal, or by the headiness of their own brain, as men are wont to be, who forge to themselves innumerable sorts of service, according to their own understanding: but they were led thither by God's command, to worship him in mount Sion. By which word he warns us, that all other temples are unholy, and all other services sinful, because they are not answerable to God's appointment. Afterwards he adds the end of this bargain or covenant; namely, *to praise the name of God*. And, truly, as of this our adoption, so also of all our doings, the end is, to yield the glory of all good things to God.

5 *For there were, &c.*] He means, that the throne of his kingdom is settled or established at Jerusalem, or that the certain abiding-place of it is there. We know there was always some form of judgments among the people; but, as heretofore they had been suspended and diversely altered, God ordained a new government in the person of David, which should flow in everlasting course: because he commanded that his posterity should succeed him in it, even to the coming of Christ. Therefore, as lately he spoke of the temple and the priesthood, so now he affirms that the kingdom which God hath set up shall be firm and stable, that he may put a difference between it and all other kingdoms of the world, which are not only temporal, but transitory. And this everlastingness has been confirmed from time to time by the other prophets: and not without cause, that the faithful might know that God would not otherwise be the preserver of their welfare, than under the protection and defence of David: and that, if they desired to continue safe and sound, they should not make themselves new kings at their own pleasure, but live quietly under that kind of government. Therefore the repetition in the word *throne* has peculiar force. *The throne of judgment and equity*, says he, *is set there: yea, even the throne of the house of David*. For it was God's will that the right and pre-eminence of reigning should continue in his posterity, until the substantial everlastingness of it were made manifest in Christ.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: well may they fare that love thee.

7 Peace be within thy rampire, and prosperity within thy towers.

8 For my brethren, and for my kinsfolks' sakes, I will now speak peace in thee.

9 For the house of the Lord our God I will seek good unto thee.

6 *Pray for the peace, &c.*] Now David exhorts all the devout worshippers of God to pray for the prosperous state of the holy city. And that he may move them the more effectually, he promises them also, on the other side, the blessing of God. Why he was so greatly careful for the welfare of that city, we have shewn before, and he will declare again, anon, in the end of this Psalm; that is, because the welfare of the whole church was included in that kingdom and priesthood. Now, then, seeing that, by the decay of the common welfare, every one of us must needs perish miserably, it is no marvel though David commend this care and this study to all the children of God. Therefore, if we mind to order our prayers aright, let our beginning be, that the Lord should preserve the body of the church. For whosoever, confining himself to his own personal interest, neglects the common state, he not only betrays himself to be void of the feeling of true godliness, but also sues in vain for his own welfare; neither shall he profit at all by his untoward prayers. Whereunto also pertains the promise that is added immediately; that is, *they shall prosper that love thee*: which member, nevertheless, may be read in the way of wishing, though in the same sense. And though, for the most part, שלום signify to live in quietness or peace, yet, as he has put the word *peace*, generally, for a gladsome and happy state, I doubt not but he promises God's blessing and a prosperous life to all the godly that shall have a care of the church. Which sentence is often to be met with in the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, even to the end of it. And hence we gather, that all such are cursed of God as trouble the church, or practise the destruction of it by any kind of annoyance.

7 *Peace be within thy rampire, &c.*] The term *peace* in this place also signifies nothing else than prosperity. For in this verse there is a doubling of the sentence; and therefore the meaning of the first member is gathered from the second. But afterwards there is added the word שלום, which now and then signifies *rest*, but most commonly is taken for *abundance* or *prosperity*. In consideration whereof, I have translated the word בחילך, *within thy rampire*. For although

I disapprove not of what others have translated it, namely, *a ditch*, or *vamure*, yet the word *rampire* agrees better with *towers*. The effect is, that David wishes prosperity to the church as far as it extends through its whole circuit. Moreover, it is to be marked, that David does not so wish outward prosperity to it, as though he cared not how it fared within; but, in alluding also to their manners, he wishes the holy city to be environed and fortified on all sides with the blessing of God.

8 *For my brethren, &c.*] He reckons two causes for which he is touched with a care of the church; first, that by his own example he may provoke all the godly to profit as he has done. Notwithstanding there seems to be a tacit antithesis, because among the wicked and malicious he might be had in suspicion, or at least was in danger of being slandered by them: as though in commending Jerusalem he sought the advancement of his own house rather than the profit of the whole realm. Lest any man might object, that by this means he craftily established his own kingdom, he avouches that he is not moved by regard for himself exclusively, but that he comprehends the whole church in his heart. I will, says he, speak of thy peace, O Jerusalem: not because it shall be profitable to me or mine, but because thy prosperity shall spread itself to all the children of God. For no doubt under the name of brethren he denotes all the faithful. Afterwards is added the second reason, because unless Jerusalem stand, the service of God shall not continue entire, but shall go to wreck. Then if we set store by the welfare of our brethren, if we love religion in our heart, we must also, together with these, make provision for the safety of the church as much as in us lies. Whence it follows, that such as care not what becomes of the state of the church are no less cruel than the wicked themselves; for if the church be the pillar and foundation of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15, it must needs follow that religion too must be extinguished by the decay of it. Again, how should not the destruction of the body wrap the particular members in the same plight? Furthermore, this place teaches that the church is not a vain title, but must be sought there where true religion flourishes. Whence it appears how silly the papists are, who, having driven away the doctrine of the Gospel, nevertheless vaunt themselves of the name of the church.



## PSALM CXXIII.

*In this Psalm, the faithful, being oppressed with the cruel tyranny of their enemies, call upon God for deliverance, because there is none other hope remaining but in his defence.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 Unto thee will I lift up mine eyes, that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters; and as the eyes of an hand-maid *look* unto the hand of her mistress: so do our eyes *wait* upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are sore cloyed with reproach.

4 Our soul is too sore cloyed in itself with the scoffing of the rich men, and with the spitefulness of the proud.

1 *Unto thee will I lift up, &c.*] It is uncertain at what time, or by what prophet, this Psalm was composed. I do not admit the argument that David was certainly the author, because when he deplores the persecution he suffered under Saul, he is wont to interpose some matter referring to himself personally. Therefore I suppose rather that some one of the prophets endited this form of praying for all the godly in common, either at such time as the people lived in captivity at Babylon, or at such time as the cruelty of Antiochus raged. Be this as it may, the Holy Ghost, by whose instinct the prophet delivered to the people this rule of praying, calleth us to God with a loud voice, as often as not one or two only, but the whole church is vexed wrongfully and disdainfully by the licentiousness of her enemies. And, in my judgment, God is expressly called *the dweller in heaven*, not only that the faithful should attribute as much to his power as they ought to do, but also that they should bear in mind that God's power remains in perfect fulness in heaven, even when there is no hope left upon earth, or rather when their state is past all recovery, as if they were buried, or lost as it

were in a maze. Therefore there seems to be a covert antithesis between the troubled and confused state of the world and God's heavenly kingdom, from whence he so moderateth all things that he calmeth all the storms of the world as often as he thinketh good, cometh to the rescue when all is lost and forlorn, restoreth light by dispelling darkness, and raiseth them that are fallen and cast down. And this the prophet confirms by the words *lift up*; that is, when all things in the world fail us, we must lift up our eyes aloft, where God abideth evermore like himself, howsoever the madness of men turns all things upside down here.

2 *Behold, as the eyes, &c.*] This similitude is very appropriate to the present case. For the prophet intimates that there is no comfort for the faithful without God's protection, but that they are naked, and abandoned to all manner of wrongs, without strength or courage to resist; and finally, that their well-doing depends wholly upon the help of another. We know how shamefully servants were handled in old time, and to what reproaches they were put, and yet for all that they durst not stir one finger to repel the violence. Therefore, when they were bereft of all defence, there remained to them that which is spoken of here, namely, to crave defence at their master's hand. The same explanation applies also to the case of the handmaids. Shameful, surely, and degrading was their estate, but the recompense that is set before us here, makes us not ashamed of the reproach of servitude. For there is no reason why it should grieve us to be likened to bondslaves, as long as God is our advocate, and taketh upon him the defence of our life, who purposely disarmeth us and strippeth us of the helps of this world, that we may learn to content ourselves with his grace alone. For in old time, because it was felony for bondmen to carry a sword or any weapon about them, and they were subject to all wrongs, their lords were wont to exert themselves so much the more promptly in their defence, if any man had offered violence to them without cause. No doubt, therefore, if God see us depend on his protection, and not put our trust in our own abilities, he will in our defence encounter all the annoyances that shall be offered us. Nevertheless, it is certain that here is properly described a time, wherein the people of God were brought to utter misery, yea, and even to despair. That the word *hand* is put for *help* is known well enough.

3 *Have mercy upon us, &c.*] He pursues and confirms the former doctrine. He had said, that because the godly were utterly heart-broken and cast down they bent their eyes upon God's hand, and now he adds that they are

cloyed with reproach. Whence we gather that the wicked not only rushed with violence to attempt what they listed, but also as it were trampled God's children under their feet in sport. And truly the repetition, which is a sign of earnestness and vehemence, shews at the same time that they wanted nothing of extreme misery. Now when to wrongs are added insults, there is nothing that wounds generous minds more. And therefore the prophet complains most of that, as though it were the consummation of all afflictions. He says that *the rich men*, and *the proud men*, mocked at the church, because it is commonly wont to fall out that as such as are high in the world look down on God's people in disdain. For the gloriousness of their honour and power dazzles their eyes, that they vouchsafe not to make any account of God's spiritual kingdom. Nay rather, the more blandly fortune smiles upon them, the more swells their pride, and the more insolently it throws off its foam. But yet this place teaches that there happens no new thing, if the children of this world, that excel in riches, hold the church in disdain. And worthily does he also term them proud whom he called rich, because wealth engenders pride. Furthermore, as we see that in old time God's church was covered with reproaches, and pointed at in scorn with the finger, there is no reason that at this day the contempt of the world should discourage us, or that the wicked should demolish our faith when they taunt us with their scoffs, yea, and also hack and hew us with their railings. For we must always bear in mind what is spoken here, that the heart, not of one man only, or of a few, but of the whole church, was cloyed, not only with wicked violence, cruelty, craft, and other ill-doings, but also with reproach and scoffs. Also it is to be borne in mind, that whatsoever haughtiness or pride is in the world, is set here against God's church, that it may be taken for no better than chaff and dung, according as Paul says, 1 Cor. iv. 13. When the same thing befalls us at this day, let us give the wicked leave to swell in their pride till they burst; and let us content ourselves with this one thing, that God notwithstanding accounteth us precious. And by the word *cloy*, especially being repeated by way of emphasis, the prophet has expressed a long-continued oppression, which filled the minds of the godly with weariness and sorrow. Moreover, how behoveful this warning is at this day, is unnecessary to discuss at great length. We see the church destitute of all defence, and lying under the feet of her enemies, who abound in all wealth, and are armed with fearful power. We see the papists rise up boldly, and pour forth their mockeries with all their might upon us and

the whole religion of God. Also there are mingled with us, and everywhere there are flying about Epicureans, who have our simplicity in derision. Yea, and many one-eyed giants overwhelm us with slanders; and this unseemliness has lasted ever since the Gospel began to put up its head again, even to this day. What remains to be done then, but to seek the light of life in heaven, seeing we are compassed about with darkness upon earth? And though our soul be filled with all kinds of reproach, even till we are cloyed, what remains, but that it should breathe forth prayers for deliverance with the importunity of the famished?

### PSALM CXXIV.

*Because the church had been delivered out of extreme peril, David exhorts the faithful to thanksgiving, and warns them by this notable example that their welfare stands not otherwise than by the grace and power of God.*

[*David's Song of Degrees.*]

1 But for the Lord, who was on our side, may Israel now say ;

2 But for the Lord, who hath been on our side, when men rose up against us ;

3 They had then swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us :

4 The waters had then overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul :

5 The proud waters had then gone over our soul.

1 *But for the Lord, &c.*] Some interpreters think that here is described that most sorrowful affliction of the church, when the remnant of the people were conveyed away to Babylon; but they rest upon weak ground. For the complaints that are read here, agree as well with the persecutions which the church suffered under the tyranny of Antiochus. But as the Psalm is superscribed with the name of David, and narrates historically that the people were rescued out of extreme danger by the power of God; it is a forced conjecture that what was not yet come to pass, is de-

scribed prophetically. For the prophets are wont to treat of things to come, after another sort. Wherefore it is more likely that David sets forth here a known history, and exhorts the faithful to consider with him that they had already had experience of God's help in very deed. Neither dare I restrain what is spoken here to David's time. This, indeed, is true; that the heathen nations oftentimes waged war against God's people, furnished with such might that their rage was like a waterflood. But as he points out no particular instance in this thanksgiving, he commends not any one kind of deliverance, in my judgment, but whatsoever rescues God sent at any time to his church. And we know that at many different times the heathen rose up against the church with such mighty hosts, that it was in a manner brought to the verge of destruction; David, therefore, as it were in a glass, sets forth the dangerous state of the church, such as it had been from the beginning; that the faithful may learn that it had not stood by its own strength, but had been preserved by the wonderful power of God, and so habituate themselves to call upon God in their perils.

2 *But for God, &c.*] It is not for nought that he twice inculcates one sentence. For as long as we are in danger, our fear is immoderate, but as soon as we have got through it, we extenuate the greatness of our misery. And Satan mocks us with this cunning sleight, to obscure the grace of God. Since, therefore, when the Lord hath wonderfully preserved us, we, for the most part, coin us all sorts of imaginary circumstances to blot out the remembrance of God's grace, David purposely dwells upon amplifying the danger by bringing the people in as it were astonished. Wherefore it behoves us to know that in these words there is a bridle put upon us to rein us back in thinking upon our dangers, lest the feeling of God's grace vanish out of our minds. The common translation, which is, If the Lord had not been on our side, expresses not David's mind sufficiently. For David affirms that he could not be saved otherwise than by God's help, and therewith teaches that the same help was both certain and evident. Two things, then, are to be noted here distinctly; that the Lord had been ready at hand to help his servants, and had taken their part; and again, that they could not elsewhere or otherwise have escaped safe, who were already as good as lost. And thus we are taught that men then only ascribe the glory of their preservation to God, when they believe that he is so favourable to them that he will defend them and maintain them in safety. In the second member is extolled God's immeasurable power,

whereof he had shewn proof in delivering his people, in order that we might know that such manner of preserving belongs not to man. By the word, אָדָם, *Adam*, which, when it is a noun collective, signifies men in general, David seems to denote a huge multitude of enemies; as if he should say, the people of God had not to deal with a few men only, or with some one nation, but were assailed by nearly the whole world, according as it is manifest enough that all mankind were at deadly feud with the Jews. When he says, *They had swallowed us up quick*, there is expressed not only the outrageousness of their cruelty, but also the disproportion of their strength. First, therefore, he describes how violent the onset of the enemies was; and secondly, how feeble the strength of the Jews was to withstand them, inasmuch as those enormous beasts needed no swords to slay them with, but were able to devour the unwarlike flock without a battle, or effort of strength.

4 *The waters had then, &c.*] He sets out that dreadful assault of their enemies with an elegant metaphor, comparing them to a waterflood, which, with its overflowing, swallows up whatsoever comes in its way. And he always retains the character of a man amazed by fear. He names them first, *waters*, and secondly, *a torrent*; and thirdly, again, he terms them *violent* or *proud waters*. Also he says, *upon us*, and *upon our soul*, as though he meant to strike terror by presenting the thing before the eyes. And certainly this impassioned language is calculated to have the effect of a graphic representation, that the faithful may the better perceive out of how deep a gulf they have been plucked by the hand of God. For he only thinks himself beholden to God for his deliverance, who acknowledges himself to have been lost before he was delivered. The adverb *then*, either is demonstrative, as though he should point out a thing with his finger, or else is taken for *long ago*. Nevertheless, the former signification best suits the present place.

6 Blessed is the Lord, who hath not given us for a prey unto their teeth.

7 Our soul is delivered as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we be delivered.

8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.

6 *Blessed is the Lord, &c.*] Now he exhorts the godly



to thankfulness, and, as it were, teaches them what to say. And here also, by another similitude, he shews that they had been undone if God had not succoured them. For he says that their deliverance was as if a man should pluck a prey out of the teeth of some wild and cruel beast. To the same purpose also makes the third similitude : that they were on all sides ensnared and entangled in the traps of their enemies, even as little birds lie under the hand of the fowler, when they are caught in his net ; and that they were delivered none otherwise than if a man should set birds at liberty after they were taken. The effect is, that God's people being weak, wanting counsel, and destitute of aid, not only had to deal with cruel and outrageous beasts, but also were snared with bird-nets and artifices, so that being far inferior to their enemies, as well in policy, as open force, they were besieged by many deaths. Whence it is easy to gather that they were preserved by miracle.

'8 *Our help is in, &c.*] Now he extends that to the perpetual estate of the church, which the faithful had had experience of before. For I interpret this verse in suchwise, as that he should not give thanks for some one benefit, but avouch that the church cannot otherwise continue in good plight, than so far forth as it is shielded by the hand and protection of God. And his purpose is to encourage God's children to hope well, so that they may be out of doubt that their life is in safety under the protection of God. Also the antithesis is to be noted, between the help of God and other means which the world places a vain confidence in, (as we have seen in Ps. xx. 8 ; *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ; but we will call upon the name of the Lord,*) that the faithful being purged and discharged from all unhallowed confidence, may resort to the only defence of God, and, upon trust thereof, calmly despise whatsoever Satan and the whole world practise against them. And though the *name of God* is nothing else but God himself, yet is there some covert intimation. For inasmuch as he hath disclosed his grace to us by his word, he hath opened us easy access to him, so that we need not seek him afar off, or by tortuous indirections. Neither is it for nought again that he adorns God with the title of Creator. For we know with what unquietness our minds heave till they have advanced God's power to its proper elevation, so that it should hold pre-eminence alone, and all the world be subject to it ; which is not possible, except we believe that all things are subordinate to his appointment. For he hath not shewn his power once for all, in the creation of the world, to withdraw it again afterwards ; but he sheweth the

same continually in the governing of it. But though all men freely and loudly confess God to be the maker of heaven and earth, so that even the wickedest cannot for shame but honour him with that title, yet as soon as any terror is set before us, we are convicted of unbelief, because we hold his help in scarcely any estimation.

## PSALM CXXV.

*Because the faithful, being mingled with the ungodly in this world, seem to be exposed to all mischances of life like other folk, the prophet, likening them to Jerusalem, shews that they are fortified with invincible defence. And if God suffer them at any time to be vexed at the pleasure of the wicked, he exhorts them to be of good hope. At the same time, however, lest the hypocrites might draw to themselves also, what is spoken here, he distinguishes between the true Israelite and the false.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 They that trust in the Lord, *shall be* as mount Sion; *which* shall not be removed, but shall stand fast for ever.

2 Like as the hills are round about Jerusalem, even so is the Lord round about his people, from henceforth and for ever.

1 *They that trust, &c.*] This Psalm differs from the former, in that it was said there, that the church is preserved by God's power, and not by worldly means; but here the Holy Ghost teacheth that it shall ever hereafter continue safe and whole, because it is guarded by the invincible power of God. And forasmuch as the church is designated under the locality of the city Jerusalem, the prophet's purpose is to exhort every one of the faithful to assure themselves that the welfare which is promised to the whole chosen people in common, pertains also to themselves severally. But in setting a visible image of the church before their eyes, he adapts himself to the simplicity of those who, being held back by the dulness of their flesh, still grovel upon earth. This, therefore, must be marked first of all; that if any perceive not God's secret defence sufficiently by the understanding of faith, to them the hills that environ Jerusalem

as a mirror, are set forth that they may in nowise doubt but that the church is as well guarded from all dangers as if it were environed on all sides with such bulwarks and walls. Profitable also to be known is what I touched upon just now; namely, that as often as God speaketh to his people, he directeth his words to each one of them. For like as many of the promises are extended to the whole body of the church, even so, many men peer at them from a distance, as if they were set far from them, and dare not apply them to themselves. And therefore, every man must hold him to the order that is prescribed here; namely, that he apply to himself whatsoever God hath promised to his church in common. Moreover, it is not unadvisedly that he makes Jerusalem a picture of the church; because the sanctuary of God and the ark of the covenant were there. As touching the words, they may be resolved two ways. For some take the first verb *לֹא יִמוּט*, *shall not be moved*, to be spoken of Jerusalem; and the latter verb *יִשָּׁב*, or *shall stand fast*, to be referred to the faithful themselves; so that there would be a change of the number, which is a very common thing among the Hebrews. And truly, it would not be improper if the sentence were translated thus; Like as mount Sion shall never be removed; so shall they that trust in the Lord *dwell* or *continue* steadfast for ever. For in that sense are the words *stand fast* taken. Now we perceive what the prophet means; namely, that though the world be subject to so many and great mutations, that it puts on a new face almost every moment, and that the faithful are mingled with others, and both of them stand in one state; yet the welfare of the godly abides steadfast through the invincible defence of God. Not that they dwell at ease; but because their welfare is assaulted in vain, since they are under the protection of God; or at least they can never fall away, though they may slip. But we must mark, that under the word *הַבּוֹטְחִים*, which signifies, *those that hope, or wait for a thing*, there is required a steadfastness of belief. Therefore whosoever covets to be held up by the hand of God, let him lean steadfastly upon it; and whosoever covets to be fenced by it, let him rest patiently under it. For that God suffereth us oftentimes to be carried divers ways, or to be tossed about like chaff, comes to pass through our own inconstancy, when we had rather flutter in air, than settle our minds on the rock of his help. The similitude which is employed in the second verse is clear enough; that like as the chain of hills exhibits the appearance of walls round about Jerusalem, even so God environeth the faithful with his power, to keep off annoyances from them. We often meet with such

phrases as this, that God will be a wall and a breastwork to his people. But David, or whosoever was the author of this Psalm, goes still further, and, under the resemblance of hills, shews plainly the secret defence wherewith God maintaineth such as are his; that the simple and weak, whom their own dulness holds down still to the earth, may lift their minds upward by the help of beholding the hills.

3 For the sceptre of the ungodly shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto wickedness.

4 Do well, O Lord, unto those that be good and right in their hearts.

5 But as for them that turn aside unto their own naughtiness, the Lord shall make them walk with the workers of iniquity. Peace upon Israel.

3 *For the sceptre of, &c.*] It is a sort of correction of the former sentence. He had said that God's hand is stretched out on all sides to defend his church. But, because we gladly draw God's promises to our own advantage, so far as that we may be privileged from all trouble, we are warned here, that God's defence is no hindrance, but that we may now and then be exercised with the cross and afflictions, and therefore that there is no cause why the faithful should promise themselves a dainty and easy life upon earth, because it is enough for them not to be forsaken when they have need of God's help. For though their heavenly father love them most tenderly, yet will he have them awakened with the cross, lest they might pamper themselves too much in the delights of their flesh. Wherefore, if we embrace this doctrine, although we happen to be oppressed with the tyranny of the ungodly, yet shall we patiently wait till God either break their sceptre, or shake it out of their hands. I grant it is a sore temptation to see the ungodly carrying all before them in the heritage of the Lord, and the faithful lying beneath their feet: but as God humbleth not his servants so without just cause, they must seek comfort therefrom. Also the reason is added; namely, *lest the righteous, being overcome with temptation, might abandon themselves to sinning*, which is to be marked advisedly. For hence we gather, that God tempereth our adversities, because he is willing to bear with our weakness. Wherefore, though there be not so much fortitude and constancy in us as to persist in our duty one moment, yet let this sentence occur

to our mind, that God, nevertheless, will so provide as that we shall not forsake the pursuit of godliness from being overpowered by afflictions. Doubtless, if he should afflict us all our life long, without release, the cross is always profitable for us. For we see how untameable the stubbornness of our flesh is; and how fiercely the rage thereof boils up from time to time; or rather, how it ceases not to wince even amid the very afflictions by which it should be enforced to obedience. Wherefore the more necessary is this warning, that the Lord in due season moderateth our temptations, because he seeth that we are unable to withstand them. Neither does the prophet say only, that it is to be feared lest the weak should quail, but lest even the righteous themselves, also, who serve God truly, and with all their heart, and are addicted to the following of a godly life, should sink under them. Therefore, howsoever the fear of God thrive in our hearts, we must nevertheless understand that we are not endued with so great fortitude, that we may be able to hold out to the end, unless the Lord have a regard of our infirmity. Now if the Holy Ghost pronounce this of the best champions, what shall become of the tyroes, that are not yet so well trained for the combat? Also we must mark the manner of speaking, *lest they reach out their hands*; whereby he teaches us that the assaults of temptations are so violent, that the hands of the righteous, which before were, as one might say, manacled, and whose motions were framed according to the appointment of God, being now as it were let loose, apply themselves to sin without restraint.

4 *Do well, O Lord, &c.*] Although the prophet had already warranted all godly men the help of God in due season, yet does he turn himself to prayer, and that not without cause. For although faith hold us up, yet as the thoughts of our flesh, in the meanwhile, are unsteady, we must mingle prayers to strengthen them withal. Let us, then, follow this rule of the prophet; who, having exhorted all the godly to assured confidence, shews, at the same time, that they must not carelessly sit yawning, but flee to God, and, with prayer, require at his hand what he willeth us by his word to hope for. And assuredly, as God's help is not discerned in the darkness of afflictions, but rather it seems that God maketh no difference between the righteous and unrighteous, we must use this remedy. And he not only requires simply that God should deal well with good men, but also defines the goodness as that which flows out of a sincere affection. For it were not enough for God's children to abstain from all misdealing, unless the inward sound-

ness of their heart be answerable, or rather, unless it govern their whole life.

5 *But as for them that, &c.*] As the participle **הַמַּשִּׁי** is of the conjugation Hiphil, according to the principles of grammar it should be translated actively. But as it is no rare thing for the verbs in that conjugation to be taken neutrally also, this translation which I have followed is allowable. Still, as the active signification squares equally well, let the choice be free. The meaning is, that God should not always wink at the wickedness of those who, making a hollow and ostentatious profession, abandon themselves to their own lust, or corrupt the simple and draw them with them into the same excess of sinning. For no doubt he treats of hypocrites whom temporal impunity so hardens that they challenge a place among the holiest, because the Lord beareth with them. We see that not only the good and bad are mingled in the world, but also that the wheat lies hidden under the chaff and husks, even on the barn-floor of the Lord. In this doubtful and confused state, the wicked swell with pride as if they were among the best of God's servants. Wherefore, we must beseech God to draw them into the light, and thrust them down to just punishments with the workers of iniquity. Hence follows that peace which he wishes to Israel. And he speaks not generally of all the fleshly offspring of Abraham, but rather he wishes to have God's church purged of the hypocrites, who occupy a place in it till God lift up his hand to judgment. Therefore I said that the peace of the church springs hence, even when God executeth his just vengeance upon counterfeit and disguised Israelites who rend and tear his bowels, gathereth up the righteous in heart, and openly demonstrateth his fatherly goodwill towards them by his blessing.



## PSALM CXXVI.

*This Psalm consists of three members. For first, the prophet exhorts the faithful that were returned from the captivity, to thankfulness, and extols mightily the grace of their deliverance, that they may certainly know that they were brought home again into their country by the power of God, and not by casual chance or by the benefit of men. Afterwards is added a prayer, that God should finish the work which he had begun. And lastly, although their full restitution appear not presently to their eyes, yet he assuages the tediousness of delay; and though their seed-time be now watered with tears, he assures them that the harvest shall be joyous.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 When the Lord brought again the captivity of Sion, we became like them that dream.

2 Now shall our mouth be filled with laughter, and our tongue with joy: now shall they say among the heathen, The Lord hath behaved himself nobly in doing for them.

3 The Lord hath behaved himself nobly in dealing with us, *and* we were made glad.

1 *When the Lord, &c.*] Some interpreters will have here a prophecy of the time to come; but it is harsh and constrained. I have myself no doubt the Psalm was made upon the return of the people, and therefore I thought good to translate the word בָּשׂוּב in the past tense. Now, whosoever either of the Levites or of the prophets, was the author of it, he says that the manner of their deliverance was more wonderful than that it could be ascribed to fortune; so that the faithful may gather hereby that the prophecy of Jeremiah was verily fulfilled which had foreset the end of their captivity at threescore and ten years: Jer. xxv. 12, and xxix. 10. And by the word *dream* he points out a thing incredible, giving us to understand that there is no room at all for unthankfulness. For as often as God dealeth in the ordinary way, such is the malignity of men that they are wont to forge diverse causes to darken God's grace. But as in the returning of the people there shone forth such a miracle as might absorb or amaze all the thoughts of men, it compels them to acknowledge it to be a notable work of God. This

is the reason why he compares the deliverance of the people to a dream; as if he should say, Surely all man's understanding is so far from conceiving so incomparable a benefit of God, that even the very thinking upon it may transport us with amazement, as though it were a dream, and not a deed actually done. What an impiety therefore will it be not to acknowledge the author of it? Moreover, the prophet means not that the faithful were so dull as not to perceive that they were delivered by the hand of God; but only that they were astonished according to the feeling of the flesh; fearing lest by reasoning with themselves on it as on some ordinary thing, they might make less account of God's power than was fitting. One might also translate the word שִׁבַּת, *a bringing back, or home again*, as some do; and thus would the analogy be more perfect: as, however, it makes little difference in the sense, it is enough to warn the readers of it in passing.

2 *Now shall our mouth, &c.*] The adverb of time, *נָּא*, is commonly wont to be translated *then*. But as the verbs are in the future tense, I thought it would not be inaptly translated thus: *Now shall our mouth be filled, and now shall they say, &c.* Although if we admit that which some Hebrew doctors affirm, that is, that the force of the particle is to turn the future tense into the past, the sentence will hang well together. The prophet's meaning is, indeed, not at all obscure, for he will have the people so to rejoice in their return, as that they may not bury God's grace in forgetfulness. And therefore he describes no ordinary gladness, but such as so steeps their senses as to compel them to launch out into extravagance of voice and gesture. Meanwhile, he gives them to understand that the grant of their return into their country is a substantial joy wherein it becomes God's children to content themselves. For as nothing was then more miserable than to live in exile, where they were after a sort dispossessed of the inheritance promised them of God, so ought they to have wished nothing more than to be restored. Seeing, then, that the bringing of them home again into their own country was an assurance of the adoption renewed, it is no marvel if the prophet say their mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with joy. With like joy also does it become us at this day to triumph when God gathereth his church together; even as doubtless we are hard and steel-hearted, if the miserable scattering of it cause us not to grieve and lament. Afterwards the prophet goes further, saying that this miracle was seen even of blind men: for we know that at that time the heathen wandered in darkness like blind men, because there shone no know-

ledge of God in them; and yet God's working was so apparent in that affair, that they were fain to burst out into open acknowledgment *that God had dealt gloriously with his people*. Wherefore the more shameful was the apathy of the Jews, if they did not freely and loudly commend God's grace, which had purchased so much praise among the heathen. And here is to be marked the manner of speaking, which declares emphatically that the mighty power of God in this deliverance was made known even to the Gentiles. Whereupon, immediately after, he repeats the same thing again in the person of himself and of the church; as if he should say, At least let us put forth such confession as God hath extorted even from the unbelievers. In adding that *they were made glad*, there is conveyed a tacit antithesis between this new joy and the long-continued sorrow wherewith they were distressed in their captivity. And he affirms expressly that they were restored to mirth, that the faithful may the better weigh how dismal their former state was.

4 O Lord, bring again our captivity, as the rivers in the south.

5 They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.

6 At his going forth, he shall go and weep, carrying scarcity of seed: *but* at his coming home he shall come with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

4 *O Lord, bring again, &c.*] The second part of the Psalm, as I said, contains a prayer that God should gather together the remnant of the prisoners. And the Holy Ghost endited this form of praying for the Jews that were already come home into their country, lest they might neglect their brethren that were in misery. For although all the people had leave and liberty given them to come out of captivity, yet we know that a small number, in comparison of the vast multitude, were partakers of this benefit: for some tarried still for fear, and some for sloth, because they saw such dangers at hand as they were unable to overcome; and they had rather welter in their own filthiness than undertake the hardship of the journey. It is credible also that many of them set more store by present ease and comforts than eternal salvation. Doubtless that was fulfilled which was forespoken by Isaiah, that although the people were as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant should be saved. Since, then, many openly refused the benefit when it was offered, and their precarious liberty was not without many difficulties and encumbrances, so that a few of sounder judgment, and

those with reluctance, durst move a foot, it is no wonder the prophet bid the church make supplication still for their bringing home again. Herewith also is to be noted what was the state of them that were already returned: for as their land was possessed by foreigners, who were all their utter foes and sworn enemies, they were no less prisoners in their own country than at Babylon. Therefore, in a twofold respect, it was necessary for the church to be careful in praying God to gather together such as were dispersed; that is, that he might cheer the timid, awaken the torpid, wean the besotted from their pleasures, and reach out his guiding hand to all, and then settle the company that had returned, in liberty and ease. Many think the meaning of the similitude added, to be this: that this should be as great a pleasure to them as if water should flow through a wilderness. We know, indeed, how grievous and painful a thing it is to travel in a hot country through arid sands. And the south is taken for the wilderness, because the south coast on the side of Judah was in a manner waste and uninhabitable. It seems, however, to me, that the prophet magnifies the grace of God by comparing it with a miracle; as if he should say, Although it be a hard matter for the dispersed remnant to grow again together into one body, yet it lies in God's hand to do it, no less than to convey rivers through the parched desert. At the same time he alludes to the midst of their journey, as it appears by the position of those countries. Thus there is nothing to be supplied in the words, which simply imply thus much, as if a river should come down into a barren and drougthy country. And truly, to open a way for his people which was as it were drowned in a bottomless pit, was all as if he should have opened a course for rivers of water through a wilderness.

5 *They that sow, &c.*] In my judgment this sentence ought no less to be extended to the future, than understood of the present. The removing of the Jews was to them as a seed-time. For God, by the prophecy of Jeremiah, had lifted up their minds to hope for the harvest: yet they were not haled into their long captivity without great heaviness and grief. It was, therefore, just as if a poor husbandman, that is a hungered already, should, in the time of dearth, be forced to abridge himself of his ordinary food, that he might provide for himself against the next year. Now, though this may be a hard case, yet is he moved to sow in hope of harvest. True it is then, that the Jews, when they were led into captivity, were no less sorrowful than he that in the time of scarcity is fain to cast his precious seed into the ground: but that afterwards ensued a joyful harvest, when they were

delivered, because God gave them gladness again, as in a most plentiful increase. But, in my opinion, the prophet seems to exhort the faithful to patience for the time to come also. For the restitution of the church was not yet accomplished: but rather, for the two causes which I have recited before, it appears that even then was the time of sowing. For though the king's proclamation frankly invited all the Jews, yet did but a few of many return slowly and fearfully by small companies. Again, they were unkindly and harshly welcomed of their neighbours, and much trouble were they put to, so that their former bondage was as tolerable. Whence we gather that, as yet, they were fain to suffer still, because the full time of their harvest was not yet come. And, therefore, it is not for nought that the prophet exhorts them to labour strenuously, and to go on in the midst of continual troubles, and not faint, till better success appeared. As for the words, some translate *תשד*, a *price*; and others translate it, a *basket*, or *seed-vessel*. This latter translation has no reason in it. They that translate it *price*, allege this place out of the book of Job, xxviii. 18: *The price of wisdom is better than all pearls*. But as the verb *תשד*, whence this word is derived, signifies *to stretch out*, or *draw out*, perhaps it may be taken more fitly in its proper signification, as well here as in that other place. For the prophet seems there to praise, not sharpness of wit, but profound wisdom: thus the drawing out of wisdom, that is to say, the continual holding out of it, will be said to be better than pearls, by reason of the deep roots of it. So also in this place the drawing out of seed is referred to the husbandmen themselves; namely, that they lengthen, or draw out, their life, when they sow. But if any one prefer the word *preciousness*, the sense will be, that when corn is scarce, seed is committed to the ground with tears, because it is precious and dear. This doctrine has yet a larger scope. We know our life is in other places likened to a seed-time: and it often happens that we must sow in tears; therefore, that sorrow may not overpower or slacken our diligence, it is right to raise up the minds of men to the hope of harvest. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind, that not all the Jews that were carried to Babylon, sowed: for many who had hardened themselves against God and his prophets, even as they had despised all threatenings, so also were they bereft of all hope of returning. They, therefore, who were bowed down with such despair, were consumed in their miseries: but they whom God's promise sustained, fostered the hope of harvest in their hearts, although they cast their seed into the ground at a venture in the time of extreme scarcity.

Therefore, that joy may succeed our present heaviness, let us learn to fix our minds on the deliverance that God promiseth. And so shall we find that this prophecy belongs to all the godly in common; namely, that God not only wipeth away the tears from their eyes, but also sheddeth inestimable joy over their hearts.

## PSALM CXXVII.

*It shews that the order of the world, as well in civil as domestic affairs, stands not by the policy, diligence, and forecast of man; but by the blessing of God alone; and that the propagation of mankind is his singular gift,*

[Solomon's Song of Degrees.]

1 Except the Lord build the house, they that build it, labour in vain: except the Lord keep the city, the keeper watcheth in vain.

2 It is in vain for you to rise early, and to go late to rest, and to eat the bread of sorrows: so will he give sleep to his beloved,

1 *Except the Lord, &c.*] There is no reason why the Jews should deny this Psalm to have been made by Solomon. They think the letter *י* imports as much as *for Solomon's sake*: whereas its common application is repugnant to it. For in all cases such a title denotes the author. Wherefore they forge this new device officiously, though it agrees very well that Solomon, who was experienced in public affairs, should, by the spirit of wisdom, treat of things that he knew and was acquainted with. And he asserts that the world, and also man's life, is governed by God, for two reasons. First, whatsoever good luck befall men, presently, their unthankfulness betrays itself, in that they ascribe it wholly to themselves: and so is God defrauded of his due honour. Solomon, to correct this perverse error, avouches that nothing happens luckily to us, save so far as God prosper our doings. Again, his purpose was to beat down the foolish presumption of men, who, setting God aside, dare adventure upon anything only upon trust of their own wisdom and strength. Therefore, stripping them of that which they claim groundlessly for themselves, he exhorts them to modesty and calling upon God: yet does he not reject either men's labour, or their forecast, or their counsels; for it is a



commendable virtue to be diligent and heedful in the things that belong to our duty. For the Lord will not have us like blocks, or to lie down in sloth: but whatsoever he hath bestowed upon us, he will have us apply it to our own use. True it is, that the most part of labours spring from God's curse: and yet God would have us still occupied, although we remained in the perfection of our first estate; even as we see how Adam was put into the garden to dress it. Solomon, therefore, condemns not the watchfulness, which is allowed of God, nor yet men's labour, by which they offer acceptable sacrifice to him, when they take it in hand willingly according to his commandment. But lest, being blinded with pride, they might appropriate to themselves what is peculiar to God, he tells them that their bestirring of themselves profits them not at all, save inasmuch as God blesseth their labour. By the word *house*, he not only denotes a building of timber or stone, but also comprehends the whole system of economy: like as, a little after, by the word *city*, he denotes not only the buildings, or compass of the walls, but the general state of the whole commonweal. And in the words *builder* and *keeper* there is the figure synecdoche. For he pronounces generally, that whatsoever labour, forecast, and policy, men employ in the maintenance of a house, or the defence of a city, shall be to no purpose, except God send it prosperous success out of heaven. Now it behoves us to bear in mind what I touched upon just now, that forasmuch as men's minds are commonly possessed with such blind arrogance, that they despise God, and advance their own ability without measure, nothing is more requisite for them than to be called to order; so that they may perceive that whatsoever they attempt shall be but as a shadow, unless God of his mere grace prosper it. When philosophers argue on the state of a commonweal, they indeed ingeniously gather together everything that seems to make for the purpose. They acutely point out the causes and means of setting up a commonwealth. Again, they shew the defects whereby a right state is wont to be marred. In a word, they discuss with consummate ability whatsoever is necessary to be known in that behalf; save that they let slip the chief point, which is, that men, how much soever they excel in wisdom and virtue, or whatsoever they attempt, are able to bring nothing to pass, further than as God stretcheth out his hand to them, or rather useth them as his instruments. Which of the philosophers ever acknowledged that a politician is nothing but an instrument guided by the hand of God? nay, rather, they placed the chief cause of a happy state in the power of man. Now, since mortal men thus presume with blasphem-

mous boldness to build up cities, and to order the state of the whole world, the Holy Ghost worthily reproveth such madness. Let us, then so exercise ourselves, every man according to the measure of his ability, and the nature of his office, as that the praise of all prosperous success may, in the meanwhile, remain with God alone. For wicked is that parting of stakes which many invent, that he who has behaved himself valiantly should leave half of the praise to God, and take the other half to himself. On the contrary, God's blessing should bear the whole sway and sovereignty alone. Now, if our earthly state depend upon the mere good pleasure of God, with what wings shall we fly up into heaven? If a house is planned, or a certain course of life selected, or laws enacted, or justice administered, all this is but to creep upon the earth: and yet the Holy Ghost saith, plainly, that all our endeavours, even in that behalf, are but trifles. Wherefore so much less tolerable is the pride of them that strive to mount even into heaven by their own power. Moreover, a man may gather from this doctrine, that it is no marvel though things are troubled and confounded in the world at this day, though justice is put to flight in cities, though man and wife find fault one with another, though parents complain of their children, and all men bewail their own case. For how few are there that in their vocation turn to God, and do not rather vaunt themselves vainly, being puffed up with pride! Justly, therefore, doth God render this sad reward to thankless men, seeing he is defrauded of his honour. But if all men would meekly submit themselves to God's providence, doubtless this blessing which Solomon commends would shine forth in all the parts of our life, as well publicly as privately. The word *למַעַל*, which I have translated *to labour*, signifies not only to employ or bestow one's pains, but also to busy one's self even to weariness and distress. I have told you that by the word *keepers* is denoted, not only such as are appointed to the watch, but also all magistrates and judges. If there is any vigilance in them, it is the gift of God. But there is need, again, of another watchfulness, which is God's: for unless he keep watch out of heaven, all the quicksightedness in the world is insufficient to guard against dangers.

2 *It is in vain, &c.*] Now Solomon expresses more fully that men wear themselves out in vain with toiling, and waste themselves with fasting, to get riches, because even that also is the benefit of God alone. And that he may move them the more effectually, he calls here to every man by name: *It is, says he, in vain for you.* And he particularizes the two means which are thought to be of greatest force in

gathering riches. For it is no marvel if they heap up great riches in a short time, who spare no labour, but consume night and day in plying their business, and spend little in supporting themselves out of their labour. But Solomon affirms that neither sparing nor toiling profits anything at all. Not that he forbids men to use sparseness of diet, and to rise betimes to go about their business: but to stir us up to prayer and to calling upon God, and also to commend thankfulness, he brings to nought the things that darken the free grace of God. Therefore we shall then go in hand with our business aright, when our hope depends upon God alone, and then shall all things fall out also according to our heart's desire. But if a man bestir him stoutly, but make light of God, his rash speed shall be to destruction. Therefore it is not the prophet's mind to allure men to slothfulness, so that they should think upon nothing all their life long, but benumb and pamper themselves in their sluggishness: but that, when they execute that which God hath enjoined them, they should nevertheless begin evermore with prayer and calling upon God, and offer their labours to him to bless them. *The bread of sorrows*, may be expounded two ways: either what is gotten with hard and careful toil, or what is eaten with unquietness; even as we see how niggardly and close-fisted persons scarcely taste a bit of bread, but they pluck their hand from their mouth again. But it makes little difference in the sense, which interpretation you choose. For we are simply taught that niggardly men profit nothing, no not even by grudgingly pinching their own bellies. *So will he give to his beloved*. He intimates that God's blessing, whereof he has treated, is seen in very deed in his children and servants. For it were not enough to believe that doctrine, that whatsoever men take in hand is to no purpose, except the promise also be added to it, that they may, through assured hope, perform their duty cheerfully. It may also be read, *he will give sleep to his beloved*, or *he will give by sleep*: that is, the things that the unbelievers strive to get by their own policy. The particle *וְ* is put for *assuredness*; for, that Solomon may the better persuade that which seems incredible and but a tale, namely, that God giveth food to the faithful without any great care of theirs, he does, as it were, point at the matter with his finger. He speaks, indeed, just as if God should feed the slothfulness of his servants by humouring them: but, as we know that men are created on these terms, that they keep themselves occupied; and as, in the next Psalm, we shall see the worshippers of God accounted happy, when they eat the labour of their hands, it is certain that by the word *sleep*

is not denoted slothfulness, but that contented labouring whereto the faithful devote themselves, through the obedience of faith. For whence comes this great heat of the faithless, that they stir not a finger without a fuss; that is, without tormenting themselves with superfluous cares, but because they make no account of God's providence? But the faithful, although they lead a laborious life, yet obey the calling of God with calm and quiet minds. Thus their hands are not idle, and yet their minds hold themselves in the stillness of faith, as if they were asleep. If any one object, again, that the faithful are often agitated with horrible distresses, and are sorely tortured about the morrow, when pinched with want of all things, and destitute of all means; I answer, that if there were perfect faith and devotion in the worshippers of God, the blessing of God, which the prophet mentions, would be apparent. Therefore, whenever they are tormented above measure, it happens through their own default, because they rest not entirely upon God's providence. And this I say further, that they are more straitly punished than the unbelievers, because it is necessary for them to be haled hither and thither with unquietness for a time, that they may come to this peaceful sleep in the end. Meanwhile, however, God's grace prevails, and shines forth always in the midst of darkness, because the Lord cherisheth his children as it were by sleep.

3 Behold, children *are* an inheritance of the Lord's : *and* the fruit of the womb *are* his reward.

4 As arrows in the hand of a strong man : so are the children of youth.

5 Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

3 *Behold, children, &c.*] Here Solomon alleges one particular wherein especially he would have recognised what he has hitherto avouched generally; namely, that man's life is governed by God. Nothing seems more natural than for men to be engendered of men. The greater part of men dream, that after God had once ordained it at the beginning, from thenceforth children are bred and born by the secret instinct of nature, God now not interfering with it: and even they that are endued with some feeling of godliness, although they deny not that God is the father and founder of mankind, yet acknowledge not that his providence descends to this

peculiar charge, but rather think that men are created by a certain universal motion. Solomon, being minded to correct this preposterous error, calls children *the inheritance of God*, and the fruit of the womb, *his gift*. For the Hebrew word שכר which they translate *reward*, signifies whatsoever benefits God bestoweth upon men, as appears evidently by many passages of scripture. Therefore the meaning is, that children befall not by casual chance, but according as God hath thought good to deal to every man his share. Moreover, as he repeats one thing twice, the words *heritage* and *reward*, import the same. For either of them is matched as well against fortune, as the strength of men. The stronger any man is, so much the more adapted he seems for procreation. Contrariwise, Solomon avouches that those become fathers, to whom God vouchsafeth that honour. And as the greater number of children do not always bring gladness to the parents, here is added a second grace, in that God frameth and garnisheth children with excellent parts and all kinds of virtues. With good reason does Aristotle, in his *Politics*, discuss the question whether the having of many children ought to be accounted among good things or no, and he denies it, unless there be added to it good disposition, that is to say, a generous nature, or a goodness of nature, in the children themselves. And truly it were far happier for a great many to be childless or barren, than to be fruitful to their own sorrow. Not without cause, therefore, does Solomon commend a goodness of disposition or generous nature in children, that he may set forth the benefit of God in brighter colours. It might seem, indeed, that the similitude which he uses is somewhat of the harshest; that as an archer is armed with a bow well furnished, even so, men are guarded with their children as it were with bow and arrows. But if a man weigh it somewhat more narrowly, he will confess it was spoken elegantly. For he means, that such as are without children, are after a sort unguarded, for what else is it to be childless, than to be solitary? It is no small gift of God, for a man to be renewed in his posterity: for then doth God give new strength, that he who otherwise would decay at once, beginneth as it were to live a second life. This lesson is especially necessary to be known. For even the fruitfulness of brute beasts is distinctly ascribed to God. If God will have it accounted his benefit, that kine, and sheep, and mares conceive, how inexcusable will the impiety of men be, to account the grace as nothing when he decketh them with the honourable title of fathers! Add to this, that except men think that children are given them from God, they scorn them, and are loath to bring them up,

whereas this knowledge is the best spur to encourage them in bringing up children. Furthermore, he that thus considers the benefit, will freely and with settled mind wait for the continuance of God's grace; neither will he be over-careful, although he have but a small substance to leave to his children.

5 *They shall not be ashamed, &c.*] Here he describes such children as, being of upright and perfect conversation, scruple not to render an account of their life, that they may stop the mouths of malicious and slanderous persons. We know that in old time all solemn meetings were wont to be kept at the gates of cities. Solomon, therefore, speaks here of the gates, as if one should speak now of a judgment-seat, or a court, or a senate. And let us note that chiefly innocence is praised in the children, that the fathers should esteem that grace as it deserves. Erewhile he had likened children decked with virtue and excellence of nature, to arrows. Now lest any man might wrest this to violence, as though he gave children leave to carry everything their own way, through right or wrong, like ruffians, he expressly places in virtue and moral uprightness the protection they ought to afford to their fathers. He teaches us, therefore, that we ought to wish not for such children as may violently bear down the afflicted, or compass men by craft and deceit, or heap together great riches wrongfully, and procure themselves lordly authority, but such as will follow uprightness, being willing to live in obedience to the laws, and ready to defend their life. And though fathers ought to form their children diligently under a system of holy discipline, yet let them bear in mind, that they cannot attain to this, but by the mere and especial grace of God. Also Solomon gives a tacit intimation, that however resolutely we may be given to integrity, yet shall we never want backbiters. For if virtuous conversation were free from all misreport, then would there be no controversy with enemies.



## PSALM CXXVIII.

*This Psalm is like the last, and, as it were, a kind of appendage to it : for it declares that the blessing of God, which, as Solomon testified, was diffused through all mankind, is most conspicuous in the true and pure worshippers of God.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and walketh in his ways.

2 When thou eatest the labour of thine hands, thou shalt be blessed, and it shall be well with thee.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thine house: and thy children as the olive-slips round about thy table.

1 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] Because it was said in the last Psalm that prosperous success in all affairs, and in the whole race of a man's life, is to be looked for from God's grace only, now the prophet warns us, that such as mind to be partakers of God's blessing must devote themselves wholly to him, because he never disappointeth them that serve him. And the first verse contains a summary of the matter : for the remainder are added but in way of exposition. Now it is a paradox, to which scarce one in a hundred will give his assent, that those are blessed who fear God, especially in this life. For there are fluttering about everywhere many Epicureans, like Dionysius, who, by reason of his prosperous voyage, boasted that the gods favoured church robbers; and also the prosperity of evil men troubles and shocks the weak, and then they faint under their miseries. And although the despisers of God may not be in good plight, and the case of good men may be tolerable, yet the greater part are either blind, or wink in considering God's providence. Certainly this apophthegm has long since been admitted by common consent of almost all men, that it is best not to be born at all; and next, to die as soon as might be. Finally, fleshly reason deems either that all mankind are miserable without exception, or else that fortune is more favourable to the ungodly and wicked than to good men. And as for this opinion, namely, that they are blessed who fear the Lord, their minds are utterly set against it, as I have declared at large in Psalm xxxvii. Wherefore so much the more fitting

is it to dwell upon the consideration of it. However, as this blessedness is not apparent, that we may be able to conceive it, first, we must observe the definition of it, which will follow by and by; and, secondly, it is to be understood that the same depends chiefly upon God's protection. For though the prophet gather into a heap whatsoever things seem to constitute a happy life, surely nothing can be more to be desired than to be hid under the defence of God. Now, if this benefit do, in our judgment, as it deserves, excel all other good things, whosoever believes that God hath a care of the world and of men's affairs, will also doubtless therewith believe that what is set down here is the chief point of happiness. But before I proceed any further, it is to be noted that in the second part of the verse, not without cause, there is added a mark which discerns the worshippers of God from the despisers of God. We see how all the most depraved, with no less pride than shamelessness and mockery, boast that they fear God. The prophet therefore requires proof in the life, for the fear of God and the keeping of his law, are things inseparable; and such as the root is, such must the fruit be that proceeds from it. Furthermore, we gather by this place that our life is not approved before God except it be framed according to his law. This is certain, that there is no religion without the fear of God: and out of this does the prophet derive that which I have said, namely, that we should live after his ordinance and commandment.

2 *When thou eatest, &c.*] Some, in my judgment, do amiss to dismember this sentence, reading, *for thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands*, by itself; and afterwards, *thou shalt be blessed, and it shall be well with thee*: so that this latter member should be the beginning of a new sentence. I indeed grant that to be true which they allege; namely, that this grace of God, that the faithful shall enjoy the fruits of their labours, is matched against the curse which we know to have been laid upon all mankind. But the sense will flow best if we read it in one strain, that God's children are happy in eating their labour: otherwise the repetition were cold, and moreover insipid. Now, indeed, the prophet, confirming the former doctrine, admonishes us briefly, that happiness is to be esteemed after another sort than the world is wont to do, which makes a happy life to consist in ease, pleasures, honour, and abundance of wealth. But here the prophet calls God's servants back to moderation, which is rejected by nearly all men. For how few are there who, if the option be given them, will choose to live from their labour? nay, who is he that would account it as a

singular benefit? As soon as the name of happiness is broached (such an insatiable gulf is man's covetousness!) in a moment each man's thoughts eagerly run upon excess. The prophet therefore bids them to be content with this one thing, namely, that *they are fed with food convenient for them*, by the labour of their hands under God their foster-father, as it has been said in Psalm xxxiv. 11; *The lions hunger and want meat, but they that seek after God shall want nothing that is good.* And we must bear in mind that the prophet speaks not of the highest blessedness, which consists not in meat and drink, nor is enclosed within the narrow bounds of this transitory life, but promises the faithful a happy life even in this pilgrimage, or in this earthly sojourn, so far as the state of the world will suffer: according as Paul says, that both of them are promised to godliness; namely, that God will have a care of us during the whole course of this life, until in the end he bring us to eternal life: 1 Tim. iv. 8. Also the alteration of the person avails to enforce the matter: for, by speaking in the third person, he directs his talk to every man severally in this sense; Not only immortal felicity awaits thee in heaven, but also as long as thou journeyest in the world, God will not cease to perform the office of a father of a family in bringing thee up, that thou mayest be supplied with daily food at his hand, provided thou be content with a scanty portion.

3 *Thy wife shall be, &c.*] Here is described again God's blessing, under the same particular whereof Solomon made mention last; namely, that God will make his servants fruitful, that they may beget a numerous offspring. Most men desire, indeed, to have issue, and it is commonly implanted in them by nature; but when it is given them many scorn it. And again, poor men like better to be childless than to leave a number of helpless souls behind them. But however various and fluctuating the objects on which the perverse desires of the world are bent, God preferreth this blessing of his before all riches, and therefore ought we also to set store by it. Then, if a man have a wife to go through life with him, whose manners are amiable, let him make no less account of this blessing than Solomon did, who in his Proverbs, xix. 14, affirms that a good wife is not given but of God. Also, if a man be a father of many children, let him receive that excellent benefit with a thankful heart. If any one object that the prophet in so saying confines the faithful to earth by the enticements of the flesh, so that they cannot with free and unencumbered minds aspire to heavenward: I answer, It is no marvel though he set before the Jews a taste of God's grace and fatherly love under the law,

because we know they were then like children. Nevertheless, he so tempered it as that they might rise to the minding of the heavenly life. At this day also God testifieth his favour to us by temporal benefits, though more sparingly; agreeably to what we cited just now out of Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that *godliness hath promise as well of the present life as of the life to come*. And thus there is no stop or impediment put in our way, that our minds cannot mount up into heaven, but rather ladders are reared for us to climb up thither step by step. Justly, therefore, does the prophet admonish the faithful that they reap some fruit of their integrity when God giveth them food, prospereth them in wedlock, and their children, and condescendeth to take care for their life. But he commends God's present goodness, to the end that they should haste forward more cheerfully to their eternal heritage. And if this earthly happiness do not always fall to the godly, but sometimes their wife be either a shrew, or proud, or of vicious habits, or if their children be wild and unruly, or even bring dishonour on their father's house, let them know that the reason why they are stinted of God's blessing, is that they have repulsed it by their own fault. And surely if every man consider his own faults he will confess himself to be justly deprived of God's earthly benefits.

4 Lo, surely thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

5 The Lord shall bless thee from out of Sion: and thou shalt see the weal of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 And thou shalt see thy children's children, *and* peace upon Israel.

4 *Lo, surely thus shall, &c.*] The prophet confirms his former doctrine, namely, that even in the outward state of this transitory life, there shines such gracious goodness of God as shews that we lose not our labour in worshipping him. However, as the reward of godliness appears not so manifestly, first he uses the demonstrative particle *Lo*, and afterwards he adds *surely*: for so I interpret the particle 'ו. Still we must always bear in mind, as I have observed before, that God's blessing is promised us in suchwise upon earth, as that it may not engross and hold down our thoughts, for we may in nowise overlay the hope of the life to come. By which it comes to pass that we enjoy not God's benefits always after one rate.

5 *The Lord shall bless thee, &c.*] Some will have it to be a prayer, and so they turn the future tense into the optative mood. But it seems rather to be a continuance of the same doctrine, for now the prophet expresses more plainly that God is the author of the benefits which he spoke of. For although his gifts oftentimes appear before our eyes, yet false imaginations dim the sight of them. Wherefore this repetition, that as often as any prosperity happens to the faithful, it is the blessing of God, is not superfluous. And he says *from out of Sion*, to call back the faithful to the remembrance of the covenant that God had made with them: for he had graciously promised that he would be merciful to the observers of his law: and these elements of godliness had they imbibed from their early childhood. Wherefore the prophet declares that he adduces no new thing, or that has not been heard of before, for they had learned long ago out of the law that it is made manifest even by temporal benefits, that God is not worshipped in vain, and this he assures them that they shall feel in very deed. That which he adds concerning *the weal of Jerusalem*, prescribes a law to the godly, that they should not only provide for themselves alone, or be devoted to their own peculiar profit, but rather that their chief desire should be, to see the church flourishing: for it were much against reason, that the whole body should be neglected, and every member should wish what is profitable for itself. Moreover, since we are impelled in that direction too eagerly, it is not amiss that the prophet commends this desire of the public weal, and so interlaces household blessings with the common benefits of the church, that we may know them to be things joined together, and which it is unlawful to put asunder.

## PSALM CXXIX.

*This Psalm teaches, first, that God maketh his church subject to sundry troubles and vexations, with this design, that he may the better prove himself to be the deliverer and defender of it. Therefore he puts the faithful in mind how piteously God's people had been persecuted in all ages, and how wonderfully they had been preserved, that by those proofs they might gather hope for the time to come. And therefore in the second part, under the form of an imprecation, he shews that vengeance shall speedily fall upon all the ungodly that trouble God's people without a cause.*

. [A Song of degrees.]

1 They have oftentimes afflicted me from my youth, let Israel now say :

2 They have oftentimes afflicted me, but yet they could not prevail against me.

3 The plowers have plowed upon my back; and drawn out their furrows.

4 The righteous Lord hath broken the cords of the wicked.

1 *They have oftentimes, &c.*] It is probable that this Psalm was composed at such time as the church of God, being reduced to a state of utter distress, or dismayed by some great peril, or oppressed with tyranny, was on the verge of destruction. And that conjecture I draw from the adverb of time, *now*, which seems to me emphatic. As if the prophet should say, When the faithful have much ado to fetch their breath under the burden of temptations, then is it high time to consider with themselves in what manner God hath exercised his people from the beginning, and from time to time through all ages. As soon as God hath given our enemies the bridle, we are so distressed with sorrow, that we are wholly engrossed with the present feeling of our miseries, and hence despair takes its rise. For we remember not that the like trial of patience was made of the fathers also, and that nothing happens to us which they have not felt before us. Therefore, the best kind of comfort for the faithful is to carry back their eyes to the former encounters of the ancient church, and they will find that she travailed always under the cross, and was sore vexed by the wrongful violence of her enemies. Now there occurs to me no more probable conjecture, than that this



• Psalm was composed after the people were returned from the captivity, at such time as having suffered many grievous and cruel injuries at their neighbours' hands, they were at length almost at the last cast under the tyranny of Antiochus. Therefore, in that confused dimness the prophet encourages the faithful to fortitude; and not a few of them only, but the whole body of them without exception. And to bear up against such fierce assaults, he bids them hold this buckler of good hope before them, that God's church has evermore been victorious by patient endurance; and there lies a covert force in almost every word. *Let Israel now say*: that is, let Israel consider with herself the trials of old time, whereby it may be gathered that God's people were never privileged from bearing the cross, and yet that the trial of them by sundry afflictions was ever followed by a happy deliverance. And by speaking of enemies indefinitely, he enhances the grievousness of the matter, more than if he had named the Assyrians, or the Egyptians. For in not mentioning any definite kind of them, he gives a tacit intimation that the world was fraught with innumerable bands of enemies, whom Satan arms easily to the destruction of good men, so that new wars rise up to them from time to time on every side. And truly histories sufficiently testify that the people of God had not to deal with a few enemies, but were assaulted by almost the whole world; and also that they were put to trouble, not by outward enemies only, but also by household foes. By the term *youth* he designates their first commencement or beginning, not only when God brought the people out of Egypt, but also when he wearied Abraham and the patriarchs with a laborious warfare, continued almost all their life long. Also, when they had been horribly persecuted in the land of Canaan, their posterity had a still worse sojourning in Egypt, where they were not only oppressed with slavery, but covered with reproaches. At their coming out again, we know how hardly they fared. From that time forth, though they had some respite given them, yet had they no rest of long-continuance till the reign of David. And although they seemed to be then in happy case, yet ere long there arose troubles and overthrows, which menaced annihilation to God's people. In the captivity of Babylon they had wellnigh mouldered away like men entombed, without a ray of hope. After their return, with much ado a brief truce to take breath in was given them. And truly oftentimes were they given over to the sword till scarce a man was left. Therefore, not without cause are they said to have been afflicted, lest any man might suppose that they had been touched but

with some light hurts ; as if the prophet should set God's people before our eyes, as it were half dead, whom their enemies dared to trample under their feet. And if we come to ourselves we shall have to add dire persecutions, wherewith the church would have been consumed a thousand times, if God had not preserved it by secret means, raising it as it were from the dead. Moreover, except we are stupified in our own miseries, the necessity of this inauspicious age will force us to meditate on the same doctrine. Further, when he said twice, *they have afflicted me, they have afflicted me*, the repetition is in nowise superfluous, to the end we may know that the people of God were not assailed once or twice, but were put to trial of their patience by continual exercises. He said they had begun *from their youth*, meaning that they were so inured even from their first origin, that it was an ordinary matter with them to bear the cross ; and now he adds, how useful and necessary was that rigorous training, because God ceased not to subdue them with adversities from time to time continually. But if the rudiments of the church's childhood were so severe, shameful indeed will be our irresolution, if, at the present day, when the church has grown up to man's estate by the coming of Christ, we want firmness to endure it. And there is a comfort conveyed in the last word, namely, in that the enemies, having tried all ways, still never accomplished their purposes, because God disappointed their hope and baffled their attempts.

3 *The ploughers have, &c.*] The prophet here embellishes by an apt similitude, what he had said concerning the oppressions of the church. For he likens God's people to a field, through which a plough is drawn. He says that long furrows were drawn, so that there was no corner free from cutting and breaking up. By these words he expresses vividly that the cross has evermore been planted on the church's back, to make long and wide furrows. Soon after, however, is added the former comfort, but under a figure, that the righteous Lord *hath cut asunder the cords*. For he alludes to a plough, which we know to be fastened with lines to the necks of the oxen. And he shews most aptly that the wicked were indeed ready to keep on their way, because their cruelty would never have been wearied or satiated ; and also that they were furnished with all their tackling : but, or ever they looked for it, God found a way to check their rage, even as if a man should sever the oxen from the plough by smiting the lines and thongs asunder. Hereby we see what the condition of the church is. For as God will have us to take his yoke contentedly upon us, the

Holy Ghost not unfitly compareth us to arable ground, which can make no resistance so that it should not be all cut up with the drawing of the plough. If any one were disposed to indulge in philosophic subtleties, he may say that this ploughing is done that the field, being sowed, may at length bring forth fruit. But in my judgment the prophet treats more naturally of the persecutions of the church. The title of *righteous*, wherewith the prophet distinguishes the Deity, must be accommodated to the circumstance of the case; as if he should say, Although God dissemble for a time, yet doth he never forget his righteousness, but giveth relief to the afflicted, in the same manner as Paul alleges this reason in 2 Thess. i. 7. And it is a thing especially worthy to be noted, that the welfare of the church is of necessity joined with the righteousness of God. Wisely also does the prophet admonish us, that the reason why the enemies of the church prevailed not, was that God cut short their attempts, and suffered them not to proceed beyond the limit he had decreed in his own secret counsels.

5 All that hate Sion shall be put to shame and turned back.

6 They shall be like grass on house-tops, which withereth before it come forth;

7 Whereof the reaper filleth not his hand, nor the gleaner his lap.

8 Neither have the goers-by said, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord.

5 *All that hate Sion, &c.*] Whether this is a prayer or a promise, the prophet has an eye to the time to come. And, no doubt, as all the verbs are in the future tense, the most suitable and appropriate interpretation will be, that from things past he should gather what is to be hoped for, even to the end. Which way soever you take it, the prophet declares there is no reason why the faithful should be discouraged when they see their enemies lifted up on high. For the grass that grows upon the house-tops is not, by reason of its higher place, more worthy than the blade of corn, that is trampled under foot upon the lower ground. For though the grass of the house-tops stand aloft, above men's heads: first, it is unprofitable; and secondly, it soon withers away. Some translate the word *עליון*, *is plucked up*, as if it had been said, It is parched without man's hand or

labour. But as it signifies properly, to be brought forth, or to come forth; in my opinion the prophet means that the freshness of it is of such brief continuance, that it withers and perishes at the first springing up, because it has no root under it, nor earth to give it sap, or moisture to cherish it. As often then as the gloriousness or excellence of our enemies put us in fear, let us call to mind this comparison, that as the grass that grows upon the house-tops is high, but yet without root, and therefore of no long continuance; so these, the nearer they approach to the sun with their height, the sooner shall they be consumed with the burning heat, because they want root: whereas lowliness only fetches life and freshness from God, that he may breathe it into us.

7 *Whereof the reaper, &c.*] He confirms, again, the proposition, that although the ungodly perk up, or advance themselves, yet they abide still in the blade. For neither bring they forth any good fruit, nor come to ripeness, but swell with mere appearance. That he may make this plain, he contrasts them with fruitful herbs, which bring forth sustenance for men in valleys and low grounds. Finally, he says they are worthy to be hated or despised of all men, whereas corn is blessed with universal good wishes. Further, as the prophet has borrowed this lesson from the affairs of ordinary life, we are admonished, that as soon as we see any hope of increase, we must beseech God, in whose hand is the fruitfulness of the earth, to confirm his blessing with full effect. And surely, considering that the fruits of the earth are subject to so many hazards, it is strange that the very necessity itself does not stimulate us to pray. Besides this, he speaks not of the children of God alone, who are infallibly informed by his word that it is his gracious goodness that makes the earth fruitful: but also he comprehends worldly men, in whom the same knowledge is implanted naturally. Moreover, if we not only desire to dwell in the church of the Lord, but also endeavour to be accounted lawful citizens of it, we may fearlessly despise all the might of our enemies: because, though they flourish and attract the gaze for a time, yet are they but barren and cursed grass.

## PSALM CXXX.

*Whether the prophet pray individually in his own name, or represent the whole church : being overwhelmed with adversities, he importunes deliverance with passionate ardour. And though he acknowledge himself to be chastised justly by God's hand, yet he encourages himself and all the godly to hope well, because God is an everlasting deliverer of his servants, and hath means in readiness, whereby to save them from death.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 Out of the deep places have I-cried unto thee, O Lord.

2 Lord, hear my voice ; let thine ears hearken to the voice of my prayers.

3 If thou, O God, do mark iniquities : Lord, who shall stand.

4 But with thee there is mercy, that thou mayest be feared.

1 *Out of the deep places, &c.*] It is to be marked that the prophet sends forth his voice, as it were, out of a deep gulf, as one overwhelmed with miseries. For as the miseries, whereof there appears no end, commonly bring despair in their train, nothing is more hard than to raise up the spirits to praying, out of grievous and deep sorrow. And, seeing we pray but coldly in time of peace and prosperity, because carelessness then possesses our hearts, it is a wonder that we should be more benumbed and amazed by adversities, which ought to quicken us up. But the prophet takes more courage to pray by reason of the troubles, care, dangers, and heaviness under which he was buried. And he expresses his thoughtfulness, and the earnestness of his desire, as well by the word *cry*, as also by the repetition which is made in the second verse. Wherefore the more detestable is the barbarian ignorance of the papists in their shameful profanation of this Psalm, by wresting it to a purpose alien from its meaning. For to what purpose do they mutter it for the dead, but because Satan bewitches them, that he may, by their treachery, quench a doctrine that is singularly profitable? For since the time that this Psalm has been wrested to the shades of the departed, it has been almost

universally believed to serve to no purpose among the living : and so has the world lost an incomparable treasure.

3 *If thou, O God, &c.*] Here, now, he acknowledges himself to suffer just punishment, however grievously he may be afflicted. Moreover, as in his own example he sets forth a rule to the whole church, let no man presume to obtrude himself into God's presence, without humbly deprecating his wrath : especially when God handleth us severely, may we know, that the same confession, which is uttered here, is required at our hands. For whosoever either flatters himself, or buries his sins by neglecting them, deserves to consume in his miseries : surely he is unworthy to obtain the least relief at God's hand. As soon, then, as God putteth forth the tokens of his wrath, let even him that seems to others to be the holiest of all men, come down to this language, that if God purpose to deal with us according to our desert, and to call us to his judgment-seat, no man living is able to stand. And though we grant that but one man prays here, yet does he give sentence at once on all mankind : as if he should say, all the sons of Adam, from the first to the last, are lost and damned, if they must render an account of their life. Therefore even the holiest of all must take upon them this guilt, that they may flee to the sanctuary of mercy. Yet does not the prophet involve others with himself, to extenuate his own fault, as hypocrites do, who, when they dare not utterly exempt themselves from judgment, resort to this subterfuge : Am I the first, or the only man, that has sinned ? And thus, while they mingle themselves with the throng, they believe that they have obtained absolution from half their guilt. But the prophet sought no such way of escape : yea rather, after he had thoroughly sifted himself, the sorer punishment did he acknowledge himself obnoxious to, because, of all mankind, not so much as one is able to escape eternal damnation. As if he had said, Whosoever shall come into the sight of God, however strong in surpassing holiness, yet shall he be unable to stand : what, then, will become of me, who am not of the number of the best ? The right application of this doctrine is, that every man should earnestly examine his own life by the perfection which is enjoined us in the law. So will it come to pass, that he shall be compelled to confess, that all men, without exception, are worthy of everlasting destruction, and every man will acknowledge himself a thousand times undone. Furthermore, this place teaches, that as no man can stand by his own works, as many as are accounted righteous before God, are righteous by forgiveness and remission : otherwise all righteousness will vanish. And even



the papists confess, that the default of works is supplied by forgiveness. But as they dream of a righteousness in part, which sustains men, and holds them up before God, they are very far wide of the prophet's meaning, as will appear more plainly by the things that follow.

4 *But with thee there is, &c.*] This verse leads us further: for though all men with the mere lips confess that there is no man in the world whom God may not, if he will, justly condemn to everlasting death, yet where is there any one that believes that which the prophet adds here; namely, that the grace which he lacks shall be ready for him? for either through drowsiness they sleep in their sins, or fluctuate amid various misgivings, and at length sink under despair. As I said before, this principle, *that no man is without fault*, bears sway among all men without gainsaying; and yet the greater part shuts their eye to their own faults, and wallow carelessly in the darkness of their own ignorance, if they are not raised out of it forcibly. And as soon as they are pressed with God's judgments, they are overwhelmed with alarm, or are tormented even to despair. Therefore, as no man hopes that God will be favourable to him, there is no care about craving pardon. If any man be awakened with the earnest feeling of God's judgment, he must needs be humbled with shame and fear. But such self-abhorrence were not enough, unless faith be added to raise up the minds that were cast down with fear to suing for pardon. Rightly therefore does David, that he may put on the true affection of repentance, cite himself first to God's judgment-seat: but lest, overpowered by fear, his confidence should fail, presently he adds hope of forgiveness to it. And surely those that proceed not beyond this step of thinking themselves worthy of endless death, we see rush against God with great violence, like phrensied men. Therefore the prophet, the better to confirm himself and others, says plainly that God and his mercy cannot be disjoined or torn asunder; as if he should say, As soon as I think upon thee, thy goodness also presents itself to my mind, so that I cannot doubt but that thou wilt be merciful to me, because thou canst not divest thyself of thine own nature; and I may certainly assure myself that thou art therefore merciful, because thou art God. And we must know that he treats not here of a confused knowledge of the grace of God, but of such a grace as that from it the sinner may certainly gather that atonement is ready for him as soon as he seeks God. Wherefore it is no wonder that there prevails no steadfast calling upon God among the papists, considering that by mingling their merits, satisfactions, and worthy preparation, as they term

it, with God's grace, they are ever wrangling with God about reconciliation, in doubt and indecision. Thus it happens that by their praying they do but increase their own sorrow and grief, as if a man should lay wood upon a fire already kindled. But if a man will do himself good by his praying, he must of necessity begin with free remission of sins. Also the final cause is to be marked wherefore God is said to be forward to forgive, and never to come forth without shewing himself favourable to his servants; that is, because there would remain no devotion and no service of God in the world without hope of obtaining forgiveness. This principle also are the papists ignorant of. Indeed they make long sermons about the fear of God, but as they hold poor souls still perplexed in doubt, they build without foundation. And truly the first point of serving God aright is to submit ourselves to him willingly and with a free heart. For as concerning that which Paul speaks of alms deeds, 2 Cor. ix. 7, namely, that *God loveth a cheerful giver*, it is extended to all parts of the life. Moreover, how can it come to pass that any man may offer himself cheerfully to God, except he lean upon his grace, and be persuaded certainly that his services please him? Nay rather, all men will shun God's presence, and be afraid of it; or if they utterly turn not their back upon him, yet will they seek subterfuges. In a word, the feeling of God's judgment without hope of forgiveness strikes terror into men, which must needs breed hatred from itself. Indeed the sinner that is tormented in himself for fear of God's threatenings, despises not God, but yet he shuns him; and this very shunning of him is mere apostacy and rebellion. Whence it follows that God is never served aright without the knowledge of his grace. Also the other reason which I touched upon must be borne in mind; that except we believe the thing that we offer to God to be acceptable to him, we are still held down by sloth and dullness. For though the unbelievers oftentimes make a shew of much fervour, as we see the papists laboriously occupied with their superstitions, yet, as they believe not that they are in God's favour, they perform no willing service the while. For were it not that their slavish fear constrains them, their horrible stubbornness, which lies hidden and suppressed with fear, would soon vent itself.

5 I have waited on the Lord : my soul hath waited, and I have trusted in his word.

6 My soul *hath waited* for the Lord before the morning watch, *yea, before* the morning watch.

5 *I have waited, &c.*] After he has testified in general that God is easy to be entreated by wretched sinners that flee to him, he concludes that he is thereby encouraged to hope well. For the preter tense of the verbs is taken in the present tense. Moreover, whereas the repetition is vehement of itself, there is also an augmentation in the word *soul*, as if he should say he trusts in God, yea, even from the very bottom of his heart. And hence also we gather, not only that he was stout in the sight of men, but also that he cherished quietness and patience before God in his inward feelings, which is the best trial of faith. For howsoever ambition withhold many from murmuring against God openly, or from betraying their own distrust; scarce one in ten waits upon God with quiet mind, when there are no umpires nor witnesses by. He adds immediately after, that the support of his patience is, that he rested upon God's promises; which promises being taken away, God's grace must needs vanish, and thus must our hearts quail and be overwhelmed with despair. But that there may be a true trial of our faith, he teaches us to be content with the only word of God. For when any man warrants himself welfare at God's hand through trust in his word, this affiance will be the mother of waiting or patience. And though he speak to himself for the confirmation of his own faith, yet is there no doubt that he ministers like occasion of affiance to all the children of God; and first he sets down the word for them, that they may depend wholly thereupon, and afterwards admonishes them that it is but a fading faith, if it frame us not to patience.

6 *My soul, &c.*] In this verse he expresses as well the earnestness as the constancy of his endeavour: for in saying that he prevents the watchmen, he shews by that similitude how diligently and cheerfully he had sought God. And the repetition is a record of his constancy: for no doubt it denotes a continual doing or holding on, and consequently perseverance. Both of them are worth marking: for it appears too much, how slowly and coldly our minds make their way to Godward, and also how prone they are to totter, yea, and also fall, at every little blast. Moreover, as the watches in old time were wont to be divided into four parts, the passage may be expounded thus: As the night-watchmen, that keep watch by turns, wait for the morning; even so, the prophet had his eye upon God with intense heedfulness of mind. But the sense seems more natural thus; As the warders at the gates prevent all other men by their wakefulness, and are the first to rise, that they may appear at their post; even so, the prophet's mind hied with

all speed to seek God. The repetition, as I have told you already, declares that he stood steady in his looking. For we must always take heed that our fervour do not languish for weariness of delay, if the Lord keep us any length of time in suspense.

7 But let Israel trust in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is much redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquity.

7 *But let Israel, &c.*] After the prophet has spoken of himself, and set down an example for all to follow in his own person, he now applies the doctrine of it to the whole body of the church. And it is to be noted whereupon he would have the hope of all godly men grounded; namely, upon God's mercy, out of which springs redemption. In the former member he warns the faithful, that although they bring no worthiness nor merits at all with them, yet it is enough for them that God is merciful. And this mutual relation between the faith of the church and God's free goodness is to be marked; that we may know that all those who believe that God will make them recompense in respect of their own merits, by no means frame their hope by the rule of the scripture. From this wellspring he derives *redemption*: for God is not moved to redeem his people, by any other cause than his own mercy. And he says, *much redemption*, that the faithful should sustain themselves even in utter despair, because there are in God's hand many and incredible means to save them by. And it may be that the Psalm was made at what time the church was in the utmost affliction; which might cast down all men's hearts if the immeasurable greatness of God's power to save his servants had not been set against it. The true use of the present doctrine is, first, that when men are plunged in the deepest whirlpools, yet should they not doubt but that their deliverance is in the hand of God, who will find out hidden means as often as need shall require; and secondly, that they should believe that he will deliver the church as often as it is persecuted; whereunto belongs also the clause that follows presently.

8 *And he shall redeem, &c.*] He applies what he said, more nearly to the church. For he gathers that God, who hath many ways open to save by, will, out of all doubt, deliver the people whom he hath chosen. By which words he instructs us, that when we are assured of God's adoption we are also sure of our salvation. One may express the

prophet's meaning more grossly in thiswise; that as it is God's continual office to redeem, and that he is not the redeemer of all men promiscuously, but only of his chosen people, it is not to be feared but that the faithful wade out of all dangers, because else God would surcease from the office which he challengeth to himself. And he beats into them again, that if Israel come humbly to God to sue for pardon of guilt, her sins shall not prevent his being her redeemer. For although the word נֶפֶשׁ is often put for the penalty of sin, yet is there a covert designation of the fault itself. Now then, as often as God promiseth a mitigation of punishment, he teacheth therewith that he will be merciful to sins also. Nay rather, by offering reconciliation, he putteth sinners in hope of forgiveness. According to this exposition, it is said that he will redeem his church, not from the captivity of Babylon, or from the tyranny and oppression of enemies, or from penury, or, in short, from any other inconveniences, but from sin. For until such time as he pardoneth men whom he punisheth, there is no hoping for deliverance. Therefore, we may learn hereby, how, and after what order, deliverance from all evils is to be sought; namely, that first we must always crave remission of sins, without which nothing will issue favourably. For they who covet no more than to shake off the punishment, are like doting invalids, who, caring not for their disease, busy themselves only about removing the symptoms. Therefore, that God may rid us of our miseries, we must chiefly endeavour to return to favour with him, by having our sins blotted out. Or else it will little avail us to have the temporal punishment remitted: for that happens oftentimes even to the reprobates. But substantial and perfect deliverance is, when God taketh away our sins, and sheweth himself merciful to us. Whence we gather also, that it is not to be feared, but that when we shall have obtained forgiveness, God's loving-kindness and mercy are ready for us, yea, and offer themselves to us. For *to redeem from iniquity*, implies as much as to put a limit to punishments or chastisements: whereby is disproved the preposterous invention of satisfactions and purgatory, as though God, forgiving the fault, retained still the punishment. Now if any one object, that God now and then punisheth those that have obtained forgiveness, I grant that God doth not always shew to men the tokens of his favour, in the same instant that he reconcileth them to him, and that although he discipline them afterwards, yet he mitigateth his rigour in the meantime. But this pertains nothing at all to the satisfactions whereby the papists feign that they offer to God the price

of half their redemption. It is quite clear, that in innumerable places where God promiseth his outward blessings to his people, he always introduceth them with the forgiveness of the fault. Wherefore it is too gross an ignorance to think that the punishment is not remitted till God is pacified by works. Moreover, though it is God's purpose to compel the faithful to obedience by punishments, it is absurd to extend it beyond death. But it is no wonder the papists heap together so many heathenish dreams, when they hold not the only way of reconciliation; that is, that God is not favourable to any other than such as seek their expiation in the sacrifice of Christ. And it is to be marked that he says, *from all his iniquities*; that miserable sinners, though they feel themselves hampered with manifold guilt, should, however, not cease to hope that God will be favourable to them.

### PSALM CXXXI.

*Here David, to encourage the people to fight strenuously under his banner, or else to exhort and allure all the godly to yield obedience to him, avers that God had always been his guide, and that he had never attempted anything without his commission and calling.*

[*David's Song of Degrees.*]

1 Lord, my heart is not haughty, neither are mine eyes lofty: neither have I walked in great matters, and such as are hid from me.

1 *Lord, my heart is not, &c.*] Because David was ruler of God's church, that he might prove himself a lawful king, and make the faithful obedient unto him, he desired to protest that he was not carried away by ambition or pride to attempt anything, but rather was held back by a spirit of calm and composed self-control to submit himself to God. Which lesson is very profitable in this respect, that there is no more certain rule of living well, than for every man to hold himself content with the lot that God hath appointed him, and not to carve out a lot for himself, but to wait quietly for God's calling, neither coveting more than is lawful, nor thrusting himself into matters headily, nor yet eagerly seeking to become great, but holding himself contentedly in his sphere. Moreover, in denying that his heart was haughty, he points out the fountain of all rashness and



unlawful boldness. For how comes it to pass that men are such slaves to their own lusts, that they fly through mid air, that they trouble the world by confounding all things, and, in a word, that they are hurried headlong by their own boldness, but because they swell with pride? But were once the haughtiness of their heart corrected, all men would cultivate moderation. That which is added concerning the eyes, is as much as to say that there was no token of pride in his gesture or countenance; as in another place the proud are found fault with for their lofty eyebrows. Although this might aptly be extended somewhat further, that is, that David not only restrained his heart, that he might not vaunt himself through ambition, but also put a bridle on his eyes that they might not be subservient to his heart that was desirous of haughtiness. The whole amounts to this, that together with his heart, all his senses were subjected to self-control. When he denies that he had walked in great matters, it must needs be referred to the mind. Truly, not only to execute the office of a prophet, but also to be adorned with the dignity of a king, yea, and to sit on the sacred throne of God's only-begotten son, were glorious distinctions. I omit the other parts of excellence in which God exempted him from the common sort of men. But as he held himself within this bound, that he desired but to serve God and his church, he had good reason to assert that he walked not in great matters. Still, lest any one should hesitate unnecessarily in one word, the portion *above me*, which follows, is to be applied commonly to great and hidden matters, or to wonderful things. The subject here, therefore, is not how low or how high David's state was, for it was enough that he held the mean without passing the bounds of his calling. But he thought it not lawful for him so much as to stir one foot further than as he was ruled by the commandment of God. And here we must consider the antithesis between David's submission and the unhallowed rashness of them who, setting God's commandment aside, thrust themselves further than is meet, or else are meddling in other men's offices. For where God's calling shines before us, nothing shall be hidden from us, or too great for us, especially if we are ready to render any manner of service. But needs must they wander in a maze, whomsoever ambition goads forward. And surely we see how God disappointeth those proud attempts wherein the children of this world presumptuously vaunt themselves. They ride about in their long progresses, they turn the whole world upside down at their pleasure, and they leave nothing untouched; and they pique themselves on their own acumen and talents. But when

they have piled up their devices in a huge heap, presently, down it falls, because there is no solidity in it. And they that will be running before God, and cannot find in their hearts to follow him, labour under two opposite vices; for some of them rush on with flaming zeal as though they were heaping stones to build up to heaven; but others, though they do not openly betray their mental malady, but proceed slowly, and as it were stealing along, look forward to a remote period; yet, (because with no less presumption, they resolve, despite of God, what they will do after ten or twenty years, as though they were lords of heaven and earth,) lay the foundation stone of their edifice in the deep sea. But behold, if God should lengthen their lives a hundredfold, they will never reach the surface. On the contrary, if a man submit himself to God; in the first place, coveting nothing; next, keeping himself within the measure of his ability, he will, with David, hold on the smooth and even tenour of his way.

2 If I have not laid down and held my soul in quiet, like one that is weaned of his mother; my soul upon me as one that is weaned.

3 Let Israel trust in the Lord, from this time forth, and for evermore.

2 *If I have not, &c.*] Here, by an appropriate similitude, he expresses better what he meant, comparing himself to a child that is new weaned. And the sense is, that taking leave of all the cares that are wont to disquiet the ambitious he had loved smallness. And because it is a thing hard to be believed, he confirms it with an oath, of the form of which I have spoken heretofore. For there is to be supplied an imprecation on himself, which is not expressed, that men may learn to refrain their tongue from using God's name on trifling occasions. As for the words, *to lay down a man's soul like a child*, is to frame it, that it may be like a child. Next is shewn in what respect; namely, that it might repose in silence. For דוממת' is a word squared out of דם, which is taken transitively, *to make one hold his peace*. Moreover, this *being quiet* or *still*, is set against the furious desires wherewith many involve in confusion themselves and the whole world. The similitude of a sucking babe, is in other places employed to designate a fault. For when the prophet Isaiah, xxviii. 9, says, *Whom shall I teach knowledge? the new weaned, or them that be taken from the teat?* he scornfully taunts the dulness of the people, as if

they were not a whit apter to learn, than babes not two years old. But here their simplicity is praised, in the same respect that Christ saith, Matt. xviii. 3, *Except ye become like this child, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And hence arise ungovernable desires, because men covet to be wise and provident above measure. David therefore adds, *My soul was quiet upon me.* Not that he leaned upon his own strength, but because he quietly and delightedly fostered in his breast, a mind that was troubled with no inordinate desires. For here is marked the antithesis between the vague and erratic, or rather violent motions of those who being not content with their own lot, rush on headlong, and the modesty of those that rest quietly in the calling of God. Moreover, it appears by the conclusion, to what end David avouches himself to have attempted nothing by the impulse of the flesh. He bids *Israel trust in God.* Truly, it would be an abrupt way of speaking, but that it was greatly available for the common welfare of the church, to have him placed on the royal throne by the hand of God. For by that means the faithful were assured of the promised blessing. And doubtless, the best ground of hoping is, when, having a sober and humble opinion of ourselves, we desire not, nor presume anything, but by God's authority and allowance.

## PSALM CXXXII.

*The prophet, whosoever was the author of the Psalm, does, in the person of the faithful, challenge God upon his promise, that he would not suffer the kingdom or the temple at any time to decay, but establish and maintain them both.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 Lord, remember David, with all his afflictions :

2 Who sware unto the Lord, and vowed to the mighty of Jacob ;

3 If I enter into the tabernacle of my house, or come upon the pallet of my bed ;

4 If I suffer mine eyes to sleep, or mine eyelids to slumber,

5 Until I have found a plot for the Lord, and dwelling-places for the mighty one of Jacob.

1 *Lord, remember David, &c.*] Interpreters agree not upon the author of the Psalm, and yet no doubt it was either David

or Solomon. For in the solemn dedication of the temple, when Solomon made his prayers, the sacred history recites certain of the verses which he has pronounced here. Whence is deduced a probable conjecture, either that the Psalm was even then known and rife among the people, or else that Solomon applied a few words of it to the same use to which he had destined the whole Psalm. And as the perpetuity of the kingdom and the temple had been promised to David, his name is set down, because God's truth stood nevertheless in force even after his death. And thus the church might justly pray in this manner, that God would perform the thing which he had promised to his servant David, not for his account alone, but for the sake of all the godly. Whereby is disproved abundantly the foolishness of the papists, who infer, from this place, that we are helped by intercession of the dead. As though, forsooth, the faithful here fetched a dead man out of his grave to be their advocate and spokesman before God. Nay rather, it will appear by the context, that they had an eye only to the covenant which God had made with David. For they knew it was deposited in the custody of that one man, on condition that it might come to all from hand to hand. And not without cause is there mention made of affliction or humiliation. For when some translate it *meekness*, it is at variance with reason. I grant that in the second book of Chronicles, vi. 42, there is put מַדְּוָה, that is to say, *mercies* or *goodnesses*, which seems to me to be put, passively, for the benefits wherewith David was adorned. But here I unhesitatingly subscribe to their opinion, who understand by it the thoughtful cares and the manifold distresses and encounters wherewith David was distressed as long as God held him in suspense. The effect therefore is this: O God, remember with what anxious cares David was tossed, with what great troubles he wrestled before he obtained the crown, and also how earnestly and thoughtfully he laboured to build thee a temple, which latter, notwithstanding, he obtained not all his life long. And with good reason assuredly was the verity of the heavenly oracle sealed to the faithful by the perils, travails, and sighs of David, inasmuch as he testified thereby how steadfast and assured he accounted that which had proceeded out of the mouth of God. When in the text they put in the copula thus: *Remember David and his afflictions*; I like it not, for the particle וְ denotes rather a special respect, that David's afflictions should be had in remembrance, or that David with his afflictions should come into God's sight, and in consideration of them he should obtain his desire.

2 *Who swear unto the Lord, &c.*] Among his afflictions

he reckons this to be the chief, that David tortured himself with perplexing doubts as to where the ark might be stationed. Indeed Moses had commanded the people long ago to worship God in the place that he had chosen, Deut. xii. 5. David knew that the full time was now come, in which that place should be openly shewed, and yet hovered still in doubt; which could not be without painful suspense about it, especially seeing he was inflamed with so great zeal for the worship of God, and also yearned for the fixed presence of God to defend and govern his people. And he declares that he sware that he would have a care of the building of the temple, all other cares postponed. Nevertheless, the manner of binding himself is somewhat rigorous and severe, as if he should forswear sleep and food, and the other supports of life, until a site were determined upon for the temple. But so to do had been a rash and unadvised zeal, because it was not in his power to set God a time, and his strength was insufficient to endure many days' abstinence, or many nights' watching. Besides, when shall we say that he made this vow? I know what some of the Hebrews answer: namely, that this oath was made by him, when he fell down for fear at the sight of the angel. I grant, indeed, that the plot was shewed him a little after. But it is a conjecture ill-supported and altogether forced, to restrain to that one instant of time, what ought rather to be regarded as having long occupied the mind. But there will be no absurdity in the matter, if we say it is a kind of hyperbolical speech, and that here is not reported the very form of the vow, as it was made in express words, but that the words are to be qualified in thiswise; Let me never enter into my house, nor get me up upon my bedstead, but that this care may come over me. He was persuaded for a certainty, that the fixed abode of the sanctuary, and the state of the kingdom, were things connected, and therefore no marvel though he neither thought himself king, nor gave himself leave to enjoy any of the comforts of this life quietly, until he was assured of a site for the temple. As, however, we have nothing certain, where we want the warrant of scripture, I allege only what in my judgment is the more probable. But this sense will square not amiss; that whether David tarry at home, or lie in his bed, his soul will evermore be heavy and disquieted, until he is informed where the ark shall rest for ever. As for the vow, the papists absurdly conclude from this and other such places, that God approveth whatsoever vows they may have blabbed out at random. For as it is praiseworthy to vow to God that which he avoucheth to be acceptable to him, so is it too sinful a presumptuousness, when men proceed rashly to

vow what they list, according to the suggestion of their own flesh. Therefore we must consider what he approveth, that he be not defrauded of his chief honour. For, with him, to obey is better than sacrifice.

6 Lo, we heard of it in Ephrata, and found it in the fields of the forest.

7 We will enter into his dwelling-places; we will worship at his footstool.

8 Up, Lord, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy strength.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy meek ones rejoice.

6 *Lo, we heard of it, &c.*] This verse is very obscure, so that it is no wonder the interpreters rack themselves in searching out the sense of it. First, there is nothing going before to answer to the word *it*, and therefore necessity compels to refer it to the dwelling-places whereof he made mention before, although they are in the plural number. There is still more labour exhausted on the word *Ephrata*, where the ark of the covenant was never set. If he treat of the time past, he ought rather to have named Silo. But seeing it is out of question that the prophet speaks of a new dwelling-place, why is Ephrata put for Sion? Some rid themselves of the difficulty by a trumpery device, that the place had two names, and that the plot, which was shewed to David, was also called *Ephrata*, because it was a fertile place; whence St. Jerome translated it *a fruit-market*, though not even he agrees in all places with himself. For in some places, where he trifles with his allegories, he interprets it *fury*, which is against reason. Truly I doubt not myself that the word is derived from פֶּרֶה, which signifies *to bear fruit*; like as Bethlehem, which was situate in the same country, is called *the house of bread*, because of the fruitfulness of it. But it is hopeless guessing upon the name of the place, and therefore somewhat must be sought that may come nearer to probability. First, there is some colour of truth in the following exposition. A rumour had been circulated that the ark of the covenant should be placed in Ephrata, whence David's ancestors came. And certainly it is credible that the fittest place, as well for the ark, as for the sanctuary, was thought to have been in his native place. Neither is it any marvel that the opinion thus founded spread itself widely, and thus this hearsay might be put for a common report. Now, if this sense be liked, the verb



should be of the preterpluperfect tense, thus: *We had heard of it at Ephrata, but we found it in the woods*; that is to say, in a place not so well cultivated, nor so delectable. For we know that Jerusalem was environed with hills, and that that part of the land was not fruitful, so that it was not without cause called *forest-like*, or *wild*. Also let the readers weigh whether this other sense will suit ill: that the faithful should say they heard of it at Ephrata; as though the Lord had promised some higher thing of Ephrata than of Sion. For although that notable prophecy of Micah, v. 2, was not yet uttered, yet it may be that God had even then spoken some glorious and notable thing concerning Bethlehem. We have heard then of Bethlehem: but forasmuch as that place is as yet hidden to us in hope, we must in the mean time worship God in a woody place, until he fulfil the promise which he hath delayed concerning Ephrata. But because this exposition is constrained, I hardly dare embrace it: certainly I do not recommend it as the genuine. To me it seems more natural that the word Ephrata should be understood of the person of David, rather than of the place; as if the prophet had said that now at length, inasmuch as God had chosen himself a king out of Ephrata, therewith he had also appointed a place for the ark of the covenant. And in the first place hearsay is put, because it was not at man's appointment to settle the ark in any place, until God's will was revealed. Neither is it superfluous that they should rejoice at the report of that glorious promise concerning the eternal settling of the temple now at length under the reign of David. Meanwhile, the faithful declare that they had not bestowed the ark in a lodging at a venture, but they say they had been informed by God himself where he would be worshipped; like as in the rightful worship of God faith evermore holds the pre-eminence, which faith springs from hearing. Furthermore, although mount Sion had scarce any excellent gifts at all, yet the faithful shew that it is unlawful to cavil about the choosing of the place, because they have heard already what God's pleasure is.

7 *We will enter into, &c.*] Here he dictates a general form of exhortation for all the godly, whereby to call one another to the place that had been pointed out by the angel. And truly it is reasonable that the more certainly we are informed of God's will, the more prompt we should become to do him service. Inasmuch then as the people knew the place that God had chosen, there was now no more excuse of slothfulness left them, but they ought to haste thither the more earnestly, because God, having

chosen him a sure resting-place, called them more familiarly to him. By which words he condemns the sloth of all those who profit not in zeal also, according to the measure of that which God hath revealed to them. Whereas they will have the word *dwelling-places* to have been put in the plural number, because in the temple there was an inner sanctuary, and then a middle part, and thirdly a court; I doubt whether the author of the Psalm spoke so subtly, but yet I reject it not. There is more importance in the term that follows soon after. For the prophet, by calling the ark *God's footstool*, shews briefly that God's immeasurable being is not enclosed in the sanctuary, as men of gross conceptions surmise. For if the whole majesty of the outward temple was but his footstool, it behoved the faithful to mount up to heaven, that they might behold God reverently. Certainly it was not lawful for them to form any earthly conception of him. In another place, Ps. xxvii. 8, it is called *God's face*, or *countenance*, and that in order that the people should, with perfect assurance of faith, give heed to the symbol that God had set before them. And the prophet speaks here more distinctly of them both; that is, that to enclose God in the temple is an unholy superstition: and yet, that it is not for nought that the church uses outward symbols, to the end they should not either neglect the furtherances of their faith, or be too closely tied to them. Although, therefore, God dwell in heaven, and above all heavens, yet are we not compelled to mount up thither in seeking him without helps. For by handing to us a symbol of his presence, he putteth down his feet to the earth, and offereth them to us to handle them. Now we see how profitably the Holy Ghost lispeth to suit the weakness of our capacity, that he may lift us up from the earthly elements to heaven. But, more than brutish was the blindness of the second Council of Nice, where the good little fathers presumed to wrest this place for the proof of image worship, as though David or Solomon commands images to be set up to God, in which to worship him. But now, after the figures of the law are abolished, rightly do they worship at God's footstool who submit themselves reverently to God's word, and exercise themselves to the spiritual worshipping of him by the sacraments, climbing up to his feet by steps, because they know he cometh not simply down from heaven, but withdraweth his feet. And forasmuch as not only the feet of God, but also the whole fulness of his being and glory dwell in Christ, the father must be sought in him. And truly his coming down is to lift us upward.

8 *Up Lord, into thy, &c.*] This form of expression conveys

a rather gross conception, that God who filleth heaven and earth should get him into a new lodging. But the outward exercises of religion which God hath ordained, are purposely decked with these titles, that the faithful should bestow their labour about them the more willingly: for if God call us straight into heaven without the use of any means, we have but a faint desire to call upon him, because the vast distance makes us afraid. Therefore, though he change not his place, yet cometh he nearer to us. So came he down in times past to his people by the ark of the covenant, wherein it was his will there should be set forth the visible presence of his grace and power. Therefore the second member is added in way of exposition, that the faithful might know that God's coming is not to be understood otherwise than so far as he made his power apparent in the ark: for in this sense is it called *the ark of strength*, because it was not a dead or empty shadow, but such as shewed in deed that God was near at hand to his church. And mount Sion is termed *God's rest*, because God would not hereafter be worshipped in any place else, as I shall declare again in a little while.

9 *Let thy priests, &c.*] Now he prays generally for the prosperous state of the church, which is connected with the last sentence: for God dwelleth not among us to any other end than for our welfare. Some think rather that here is wished that the pure service of God might flourish, and that holiness is required to such extent in the priests, that the prophet alludes even to their holy garments. But when I lay all things together, and weigh them more nearly, I rather incline to another opinion; namely, that here a prayer is made, that righteousness might shine forth in the people, and also be the ornament of the priests, and then bring gladness to the whole realm. Thus I take *righteousness* for the fruit of righteousness, and I understand it not of the righteousness of men, but of the righteousness of God. That the priests are placed in the first rank it is no strange thing; for we know that the order of the church was so framed, as that they had chief pre-eminence. Notwithstanding, in assigning them their proper degree, he ceases not to pray for the whole church in common; as if he should say, Lord, bring to pass that the brightness of thy righteousness may shed its beams from all the priests to the whole people. And God is said to clothe us with his righteousness, when he is seen to be our deliverer, when he maintaineth us by his power, and when he so governeth us as to testify that he hath a care of us. And no doubt the *rejoicing* which he adds immediately, betokens a blessed life. Seeing he joins

these two things together, it follows that the word *righteousness* is not taken for anything else than God's protection and governance. To the same purport will follow soon after, *Thy priests shall be clothed with welfare*. And Solomon, in that solemn prayer which I touched upon before, makes not mention of the name of *righteousness*, but of *welfare* only. Why all the faithful should be termed **דַּוְדִּים**, or *God's meek ones*, has been often stated before; namely, because there is no virtue whereby men approach nearer to God, than beneficence.

10 For thy servant David's sake shun not the face of thine anointed.

11 The Lord hath sworn unto David in truth, and he will not turn away from it, Of the fruit of thy womb will I set upon thy throne.

12 If thy sons keep my league, and my covenants which I shall teach them, their sons also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.

10 *For thy servant, &c.*] Some join the beginning of this verse to the end of the last: which though I disprove not, yet will the readers easily see that this verse must be read in one strain. Moreover, before I expound the meaning of the prophet, it is to be understood, that to these words, with too much subtlety, the following sense is attached: *turn not away the face of thine anointed*; that is to say, Bereave us not of the sight of our redeemer; for it is distinctly gathered from Solomon's prayer, that he rather beseeches God to shew himself favourable to the king. Like as in 1 Kings, ii. 20, when Bath-sheba sues to her son Solomon, she uses the same word; as if she should say, Put me not out of thy presence. Therefore it implies as much as *to shun*, and it was needful to touch upon it briefly, because the aforesaid interpretation, namely, *take not away the promised redeemer*, plausible as it is, would easily win over the unskilful. But God is here simply prayed not to disdain or reject the king's prayers, which he makes for his whole realm. And grace or favour is requested here in David's name, for no other cause than that God had made the covenant with him: for, in respect of this privilege, he was not to be reputed as one of the common sort. The effect is; that God, being mindful of his promise, should continue his favour toward David's posterity: for even to every one of the kings then was here endited a form of praying for the church, but the foundation was laid in the person of David. Therefore even at that

time were the faithful admonished under a figure, that Christ should be the mediator that should make intercession for the whole body of the people. But as Christ had not yet put on our flesh, nor as yet accomplished his sacrifice, and entered into the sanctuary of heaven, there was a typical mediator for a time interposed, who should give the people boldness to pray.

11 *The Lord hath sworn, &c.*] Now he expresseth more plainly that he hath not an eye to anything else in David than the free promise which was deposited with him. And lest he should waver in the belief of it, God saith that it was sanctioned with an oath. As for the words; he says that God swore truth, that is, not deceitfully, but in good earnest, and therefore it was not to be feared lest he should depart from his promise. Now the promise was, to give David a successor of his seed: for he now almost despaired of the continual succession, not because he wanted children, but because he saw disastrous troubles reigning in his house, and the same rent asunder with intestine dissensions, such as might ruin his whole family. And though Solomon were the party marked out, yet is there no doubt but the promise extended to the entire succession for ever. And forasmuch as God by this means had provided not for David alone, but for the whole church, the faithful are now desired to be of good cheer, inasmuch as God had set up such a kingdom among them, as was not transitory or frail, but the stability of which was solemnly guaranteed. And it was needful, that as well the king as the people should be put in remembrance of this extraordinary stay. For we see how proudly earthly kings vaunt themselves: for although from the lips outward they profess to reign by the grace of God, yet do they become vain in their own haughtiness: yea, we may say further, that for the most part they obtrude themselves by force upon the royal throne, so that lawful calling can seldom take place. Worthily, therefore, is David's sacred reigning, which was grounded upon the heavenly commission, distinguished from earthly empires.

12 *If thy sons keep, &c.*] Now he proceedeth more openly to that succession I spoke of, in so far as its long continuance is maintained. And although in this world king's sons succeed their fathers by right of inheritance, yet is it certain that David's kingdom is by singular privilege exempted from the common rule, because God avoucheth expressly that there shall always rise up a progeny, which shall possess the royal throne, and that not for an age or two, but for time without end. For though that kingdom was destroyed, yet within a while after there followed a restoration,

and the everlastingness of it was established in Christ. But here arises a question, whether the continuance of the kingdom depended upon the deserts of men. For the condition under which God covenanteth, hints that God's covenant should not stand in force, unless men performed faithfully their part. Whence it follows that the effect of the promised grace depends upon their obedience. But first we must consider that so far as God had promised to send a redeemer, at whose hand salvation was to be looked for, that covenant was utterly of free gift, because it flowed out of the first adoption, which also is itself of free gift. And truly the perfidy of that wicked nation did not prevent God from shewing openly how he made no account of deservings by setting forth Christ. And therefore Paul, Rom. iii. 3, says; *Though some of them believed not, is the truth of God therefore made of none effect?* Meaning that God had continued his favour towards the Jews, because he had chosen them freely; and that whereas they had seemed oftentimes, even of set purpose, to have gone about to bring his promises to nought, yet he strove against their wickedness with incredible goodness; and so it came to pass that his truth got the upperhand. For he looked not to what they had deserved, but stood steadfast in his own purpose. Now we perceive that inasmuch as the said covenant was not conditional, but because it drew other appurtenances with it, therefore was this condition annexed, *If ye will obey my commandments, I will bless you.* Because the Jews had swerved from this obedience, they were carried away into captivity. And then seemed God to disannul his covenant, or to divest it of its sanctity, as we have seen elsewhere. That scattering, therefore, was a sort of breaking off of the covenant, but in part only, and to outward seeming. But this will be made clearer, if we go back to the sacred records for a fuller account of what befel within a while after David's death. For the kingdom was brought to ruin by the falling away of the ten tribes, so that there remained but a small portion. Afterwards it was reduced from time to time with fresh disasters, until at length it was torn up by the root. And although their returning from the captivity gave them some hope of restitution, yet was there none then that bare the name of king, and the rank of Zerubbabel was not illustrious until there sprang up kings who were spurious, and not of the right line. Who would not have said that God's covenant had been utterly abolished? And yet, forasmuch as the redeemer came not from elsewhere, it appears by the effect that it had stood sure and stable. In this sense it is said in the prophet Ezekiel, xxi. 26, concerning the king's



crown; *Away with the close crown; awry, awry, awry will I set it, until he come whose it is.* Truly, the prophet seems to cancel God's handwriting, and to reverse his covenant. For the salvation of the people was coupled with the kingdom, according as it is written in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, *Christ, or the anointed our Lord, in whose spirit we breathe.* Now though the prophet seem to break off the covenant, by taking away the crown, yet by and by, in the second part, he shews that it shall be everlasting and inviolable, inasmuch as it is of free gift; so that though the Jews had estranged themselves for a time from the favour of God, yet he promiseth them a redeemer. For like as God punished his unthankful people, and thereby shewed that he had not spoken conditionally in vain; even so also, by the coming of Christ, he freely performed the thing that he had freely promised, when he set the crown again upon Christ's head. Now, when God exacteth so straitly the keeping of his covenant, he rejecteth all inventions of men, and holdeth us back to the pure doctrine of his word.

13 Because the Lord hath chosen Sion, he hath loved to dwell in it.

14 This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell: for I have a love to her.

15 Blessing, will I bless her victuals, and satisfy her poor with bread.

16 And I will clothe her priests with welfare; and her meek ones shall leap for joy.

13 *Because the Lord, &c.*] Here, coupling the kingdom with the priesthood and spiritual service, he confirms more expressly that it was not chosen at man's pleasure, but grounded on the heavenly decree. This linking together, therefore, is to be marked: for the stability of that kingdom was not to be sought for elsewhere than in Christ; but the kingdom of Christ is inseparable from his priesthood. Hereby we see to what end he declares that Sion was chosen, even because God had not decreed anything concerning the kingdom by itself alone, but would have the sanctuary go jointly with it, that it might be a true image of the mediator that was to come, who according to the order of Melchisedek, is not only a king, but also a priest. Whence it follows that the state of the kingdom and the state of the tabernacle are things inseparable. Afterwards is noted the cause of the said choosing; that is, that mount Sion was not chosen for her excellence, as we have also seen in Ps. lxxviii. 68, but because it pleased the Lord so to

do. For the favour or good pleasure of God is, with good reason, set against the worthiness of the place. Whereby appears again that which I touched upon just now ; namely, that the covenant which God made with David, proceeded from his own mere goodness.

14 *This is my rest, &c.*] To give the aforesaid sentence the more authority, he repeats it in the person of God. And God avoucheth that the temple shall not be built for him in vain, inasmuch as he will put forth his hand out of heaven, and in very deed, and effectually, shew that he accepteth the worship which he hath commanded. For God's *rest* and *dwelling* betoken the presence of his power in respect of men. Thus he dwelt in Sion, because the faithful called upon him duly there, according to the appointment of the law : neither also did they lose their labour, for he granted their desires. And it was manifested by the deed itself, that this was promised by God, who cannot deceive. For although the temple were overthrown, the altar broken down, and the whole legal ceremonial brought to an end, yet did God's glory and majesty return by and by, as it were out of exile, and there keep their residence even unto the coming of Christ. Meanwhile we know how impiously and wickedly the Jews perverted this prophecy, as though God had been bound to them as a slave : insomuch, that under this pretence they durst proudly despise, or rather cruelly persecute, all the prophets. Wherefore shrewdly does Luther call this promise, The bloody promise. For, according to the custom of hypocrites, who are wont to make a curtain of God's holy name, to shroud their guilty deeds with, whatsoever crimes they were charged withal, they hesitated not to tell the prophets to their faces, that yet, for all that, it lay not in the power of prophets to take away that which God had given. For to bereave the temple of God's glory, was with them, the same as to charge him with lying, or to make a divorce betwixt him and his truth. This inebriate presumption of theirs drove them to shed innocent blood, without measure and without end. And truly, were the Romish Satan at this day armed with so honourable a title, what would he not dare to do ! There is no syllable in the scripture that can afford a colour for his tyranny. Now, though he makes havoc of all religion and godliness with outrageous barbarism, together with undisguised insult to God, we see with what fierce, or rather truculent insolence, he thrusts before our eyes the title of the church. What, then ! shall the hierarchy be abolished, which must of necessity stand, except Christ falsely forsake his spouse ? But we have an exception ready for that ; namely, that the church is not tied to any one place ; and

that ever since the majesty of God has been made known, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth, his resting-place is not elsewhere than in Christ and his members. Moreover, this everlasting continuance of the temple which the prophet speaks of, must be understood heedfully. For, as the world was renewed in Christ, we cannot say that the figures were vain, whereof the force and accomplishment were set forth in him. Now if any man object, that mount Sion is named as the eternal dwelling-place of God, the solution is obvious; namely, that, for assuring the truth of the prophecy, it suffices that Christ hath now, by his coming, enlarged that hill even to the uttermost borders of the earth.

15 *Blessing, will I bless, &c.*] It was the highest point of happy life, to have God dwelling in the midst of his people. Now are added the tokens of his fatherly favour, in that he will prepare and give necessary food to his people, relieve their wants, deck their priests with health, and environ all the godly with gladness. And this addition was not superfluous: for we are not so spiritual that we can pierce into heaven, except God's blessing offer itself to our eyes. And it is to be considered that this blessing in our daily food is twofold: that is, in enriching the earth, that it may yield us grain, wine, and oil; and also in multiplying the produce of the earth by his secret working, that it may suffice to nourish us. In this place God declares that he will have a special care of his people, so that they may want nothing to their support: and although there may not be always great store, yet will he bring to pass that the poor shall be satisfied in their penury. No less notable than ridiculous is the ignorance of the papists in this place, which shews that they were all stricken with the spirit of dulness, in that, for want of judgment, they made *food* of *dung*. For whereas in the Latin it was written *victum*, which signifies food or victuals, they, making no distinction between the two letters of *c* and *t*, but confounding them with *d*, read it *vidum*; and, because the word was yet still maimed, they thought it should be read *viduam*, which signifies a widow; and so of *victuals* they made *widows*: a portent which would surely be incredible, if, impervious to shame, they did not still repeat the blunder in their churches. But like as God promiseth to bless his people's victuals, so he curseth their minds and their tongues, that they may pervert the whole order of nature with their monstrous ravings. Afterwards, he again confirms what he said before of the rest of God's benefits, saving that instead of *righteousness* he puts *welfare*, but in the same sense, as I have declared heretofore. For

whereas some will have the word *welfare* to import pureness of doctrine and holiness of life, it is too far-fetched. For the prophet means simply, that they shall be safe and happy under God's protection.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud :  
I have prepared a candle for mine anointed.

18 I will clothe his enemies with shame ; but upon  
him shall the diadem flourish.

17 *There will I, &c.*] He returns to the state of the kingdom, whereof God had promised to be the governor and maintainer. But the peculiar force of the words must be marked more nearly. *I will*, says he, *make the horn of David to bud*. It is certain, that, among the Hebrews, the word *horn* implies strength, and power or defence, and that pretty generally. But by the word *bud* the prophet denotes as well the despised beginning of the kingdom, as also the wonderful restitutions of it. David, being advanced from a humble cot and the sheeps' dung to the royal throne, though but the youngest son of a herdsman, went on increasing continually by unlooked-for accessions. Again, the kingdom was so cut down by Jeroboam, that it remained in humble state by continually budding. Besides this, how many pluckings up had followed, which were harbingers of as many destructions, if new shoots had not sprung up from time to time! And what would have become of the people, when they were scattered into captivity, if God had not made their broken and battered horn to bud? And therefore not unfitly does Isaiah, xi. 1, compare Christ to a twig, that shoots not out of a high tree, but out of a shrub. And perhaps Zechariah, vi. 12, alludes to this same prophecy, saying, *Behold the man, his name is Branch*: verily, because after that horrible desolation, the kingly power could not be restored otherwise. David speaks in another sense in the second book of Samuel, xxiii. 5, where he commends the continual augmentations of his kingdom under the same term. But here the prophet means, that although the horn of David now and then either wither or break off, yet will God, by wonderful means, cause it to grow up again. To the same purpose makes the metaphor of *the candle*, which is frequent in other places, because the prophecy was commonly known among the people. The meaning is, that though the dignity of the kingdom were sometimes obscured or dimmed with mist, yet might it never come to pass that any misfortunes could utterly quench it, because God's candle or lamp burned evermore there, the

light whereof, although it could not be seen far off, yet shewed certain salvation to the faithful. Then, indeed, faint glimmerings issued from that lamp, but now Christ, the sun of righteousness, illumineth the world with a full blaze of light.

18 *I will clothe his enemies, &c.*] As, before, he robed the priests with righteousness and health, so also now he clothed David's enemies with shame as with a garment. For as it were not enough to be at peace inwardly, except God defended us also from outward force and harm, there is now added this second promise, wherein also God's favour often shines more clearly upon us, than when he enricheth us with all kinds of good things in peace. For the more our enemies' threatenings and terrors touch our hearts, the more also must they awaken our spirits that they may take hold of God's help. And yet we are warned in this place, that the church shall never enjoy such repose upon earth but that it shall from time to time be troubled with sundry enemies, whom Satan ceases not to stir up to the destruction of it. But it is well for us, that we hear from God's lips, that they shall at length go back with shame and dishonour, when they have exhausted all their arts in vain. That which follows is wrested in all sorts of ways by the interpreters. For as the verb *וַיִּשָׁא*, in the conjugation Hiphil, signifies sometimes *to look at*; some translate it, David's diadem shall be looked at in the same place where his horn shall bud. Others derive it from *וַיִּשָׂא*, which signifies *plate*, as if it had been said, The king's crown shall be glittering with plates of gold. But more correctly, in my judgment, he now avoucheth that his crown shall flourish, in the same sense that he spake just now of the budding of it. Like as, contrariwise, Isaiah, xxviii. 1, likens the crown of drunkenness of Ephraim to a faded flower. And thus the meaning will be, that though the diadem of David's posterity shall often be in a decaying state in appearance, yet shall it be renewed by a secret quickening, so that it may flourish for evermore.

### PSALM CXXXIII.

*It is an expression of joy for the holy concord of the people; to the cherishing whereof one towards another the prophet allures all the faithful.*

[*David's Song of Degrees.*]

1 Behold, how good and comely a thing it is for brethren to dwell even together!

2 Like as the precious oil upon the head, that runneth down upon the beard, even the beard of Aaron, which droppeth down upon the border of his garments.

3 Like as the dew of Hermon which falleth upon the hills of Sion : for there hath the Lord commanded blessing, *and* life for ever.

1 *Behold how good, &c.*] I doubt not but David's object in this Psalm was to render thanks to God for the reunion of the whole people, after they were gathered together again from their long-continued and sorrowful scattering, and to exhort every man to strive for the maintenance of peace. For he dwells long, at least so far as the shortness of the Psalm would allow, upon the commendation of it. And not without cause does he commend God's grace with glorious encomiums, for gathering again into one body the people that were miserably dismembered. For after he had obtained the kingdom, because he had been esteemed a long time as a common enemy, the greater part were still somewhat strange unto him. Nay rather, we know that the Jews were divided among themselves in deadly feud, so that there was no hope of agreement, but in the destruction of one part or other. It was therefore a wonderful and unlooked-for work of God, that they could fall to agreement and embrace one another, who had contended with such vehement rancour. This circumstance the interpreters improperly pass over, as though David generally, and without having an eye to himself, commended agreement among the worshippers of God. And first, I think the adverb *behold* carries great force with it; not only because it places the matter before the eyes, but also because there is in it a covert comparison of the civil war, whereby they were almost brought to desolation, with happy and desirable peace. He therefore amplifies God's grace, in respect that long experience had taught the Jews the better, how inestimable a benefit unity is, because they had almost undone themselves by intestine discord. Which exposition is confirmed by the particle *even*, at the end of the verse. For those interpreters mar the prophet's meaning, who take it for the copula *and*, as it not a little increases the earnestness of the expression; as if he had said, We who were brothers by nature, have been so torn asunder, that we have been more hated one of another than of foreign enemies. Now, therefore, see how good a thing it is to foster that brotherly unity even in our hearts. Meanwhile it is not to be doubted but that the Holy Ghost advanceth with due commendations



the brotherly agreement that ought to flourish among all the children of God, that every man should apply his efforts thereunto. But if animosities divide us, or heart-burnings tear us asunder, we shall remain brothers still, in respect of God at least; but because we shall be but fragments of a dismembered body, we shall not be accounted one. Therefore, as we are one in God the Father and Christ his Son, even so must unity be established among us by mutual agreement and brotherly love. If at any time the Lord grant the papists to return from their rebellion to godly concord, we may give God thanks in these words. Meanwhile, it becomes us to embrace as many of them as submit themselves gently to God. But as Satan continually raises up turbulent spirits, let us withstand them, and diligently keep together as many as yield themselves teachable and obedient. But we must needs let the obstinately wilful alone, with whom there can no brotherly communion be kept, but by renouncing our supreme father from whom springeth all relationship. For the peace which David commends must begin at the lawful head. Whereby is sufficiently disproved the dishonesty of the papists, who upbraid us bitterly with schisms and dissensions, as though it were not sufficiently proved on our behalf, that we desire nothing but that they should agree with us in the truth of God, which is the only bond of holy union.

2 *Like as the precious oil, &c.*] David distinctly confirms what I said just now; that is, that the true unity of brethren has its beginning from God, and that the lawful end of it is, that all men should worship God purely, and call upon him with one consent. For to what purpose borrows he the similitude of the holy oil, but that religion should always hold the pre-eminence? As if he should say, it were but a heartless peace that men would keep among themselves, except it were bedewed with the perfume of God's service. Now then we perceive, that men must be so linked together in mutual love, as that all of them must be under God's governance. As for them that like not this condition, it is better for us to contend fiercely with them, than to purchase their peace with the contempt of God. For we must bear this in mind, that in the person of the priest, here is shewn how concord flows from the true and pure service of God; and then by the priest's beard and the skirts of his garments is denoted, that the peace which emanates from Christ the head, is shed abroad as far and wide as the church extends. The other similitude, which is borrowed from the dew that falls as well upon mount Hermon as mount Sion, shews that godly concord not only has a sweet scent before God, but

also brings forth profitable fruits, like as the dew yieldeth sap and freshness by moistening the earth. We know what Moses says of Judah, that it is not like Egypt, which the overflowing of a river makes fruitful, but that it looks daily for rain from heaven. David therefore admonished them that the life of man will be meagre, in a word, wretched, without the solace of brotherly agreement. It is certain that mount Hermon was rich and fertile, for it is famous among pasture grounds. But the fertility of mountains arises chiefly from the dew of heaven, which was apparent enough in mount Sion. Lastly, David adds that God commands blessing or blessedness to be where peace is maintained; that is, he testifies by abundance of all good things, how greatly it pleases him when men live in unity and are of one mind. This sentence has Paul followed in other words, 2 Cor. xiii. 11, and Phil. iv. 9, saying, *Be at one among yourselves, and the God of peace will be with you.* Let us then endeavour, as much as in us lies, to make room for brotherly concord, that God's blessing may also rest among us. Yea, with outstretched arms let us desire to embrace those who are separated from us, if so be that they refuse not to return into the unity of faith. And if any spurn at us, let us bid them farewell. For, as I have said, we have no brotherhood but with the children of God.

### PSALM CXXXIV.

*It is an exhortation to praise God; which though it belong generally to all the godly, yet is peculiarly directed to the priests and Levites.*

[*A Song of Degrees.*]

1 Behold, praise ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand in the house of the Lord by night.

2 Lift up your hands unto the sanctuary, and praise ye the Lord.

3 The Lord, that made heaven and earth, bless thee from out of Sion.

1 *Behold, praise ye, &c.*] Some interpreters suppose that with the Levites are comprehended the other worshippers of God also. And certainly, I grant that some of the people, who were more fervent in zeal than others, abode all night in the temple, even as in Luke, ii. 37, it is said of

Anna the widow, that she occupied herself in praying continually both night and day. But it appears from the end of the Psalm, that the prophet exhorts none but the priests. For he dictates to them a form of blessing, wherewith to pray for the common welfare; which charge was enjoined only to the priests. Therefore, I interpret it, that the Levites are called God's servants, from the office to which they were devoted, as truly it was chiefly their charge to watch in the temple all night, and that by courses, as the sacred records shew, Levit. viii. 35. And therefore, by the demonstrative adverb *behold*, he brings them as it were to a thing actually present, because it became them to be the more stirred to the exercises of godliness, by the continual beholding of the temple. Further, it is to be noted for what purpose the prophet is so earnest in moving them to praise God. For as nothing is more easy than to abuse ceremonies, many of the Levites would have thought themselves discharged of their duty, if they had but stood idle in the temple; and so had the chief end been neglected. The prophet therefore shews, that the night-watches which the Levites kept for guarding the temple, the kindling of lights, their busying themselves about sacrifices, was all a farce, and a thing of nought, unless they exercised themselves in the spiritual service of God, and referred all their outward ceremonies to that chief sacrifice, so that God's praises might be set forth. As if he should say, You think it a painful matter, that while other men sleep in their houses, you stand watching all night in the temple: but God requires another more excellent service; namely, that you should sing his praises before all the people. In the second verse he adds a ceremony, which is coupled with calling upon God: for to what purpose do men lift up their hands in praying, but to raise up their hearts to God? The prophet, therefore, covertly reproves the slothfulness of such as in the temple continued in a state of listlessness, or interrupted the pure service of God with trifling and talking together.

3 *The Lord, that made, &c.*] This verse, in my judgment, compels me to expound the Psalm as referring to the priests and Levites alone, whose peculiar charge it was, by the appointment of the law to bless the people, Num. lxiii. And after the prophet has exhorted them to praise God, now he adds the second part of their duty; which is, to bless the people in the name of God: yet had not God enjoined them this office to the end that all other men should live in unconcern, as they do in the papacy, where the whole people believe that God is worshipped aright, if the monks chant

in the churches. But it was God's purpose, that the priests should take the lead of others, so that every man might practise at home, in his own house, what he saw done by the priest in the church: and to bless the people was enjoined them in respect that they bore the person of Christ. Moreover, not unfitly are these two things set down distinctly; namely, that both they and also God, who is the maker of heaven and earth, should also bless. The title of *Creator*, is set down to betoken God's mighty power, that the faithful may be bold to hope for anything at God's hand. For what is the world but a mirror of his infinite power? so that they are more than senseless, who think it not enough for them to have the favour of him, at whose command they see that all things are, and in whose hand they see all abundance. Furthermore, as at the hearing of the name of *Creator* many would despair of ever coming at God, as though he were to be sought a great way off; therefore, the prophet has set before their eyes a symbol of his nearness, so as they may be bold to approach him familiarly and boldly, whom they perceive to allure them to him no less gently than if he proffered them his fatherly bosom. Therefore, in beholding the heaven, they recognise God's might and power; and in his dwelling-place of Sion, his fatherly love.

### PSALM CXXXV.

*It is an exhortation to sing God's praises: partly, because he had vouchsafed singular grace to his chosen people; and partly, because his mighty power and glory appear in the whole world. Also there is added an antithesis between idols, which are vain counterfeits of the godhead, and the God of Israel, who, by assured and evident testimonies, hath proved himself to be the true and only God: that the godly may be led the more cheerfully to praise God, and to resign themselves to his direction.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord, ye servants of the Lord; praise ye *him*.

2 Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

3 Praise ye God, for the Lord is good; sing ye unto his name, for it is a sweet thing.

4 For God hath chosen Jacob to himself, and Israel for his own chief treasure.

1 *Praise the name, &c.*] Although there is scarcely any

difference in words between the beginning of this Psalm and that of the last, yet would the prophet seem now to exhort not only the Levites but also the whole people. For he reckons up the causes of praising God, which ought to bear sway with all the godly in general. Neither speaks he of the night-watches, and the incessant guard. But as it was the peculiar office of the priests to go before the rest in this exercise of religion, and, as it were, to sing or give out God's praises to them, it will be no absurdity that they are called and spurred forward to perform their parts. And whosoever will weigh the words somewhat nearly, will see the people associated in the second rank with the priests. For the prophet speaks first, to God's servants that stand in his temple, and secondly, that stand in his courts, whereas in the former Psalm there was made no mention of any courts. And he seems to have set down courts in the plural number because the priests had also their court; and then, after that, there was another common court for all the people, whom the law, Levit. xvi. 17, debarred from entering into the sanctuary. Moreover, lest this doctrine or exhortation to praise God, so often repeated, should be tedious, we must bear in mind what we have said heretofore, that no sacrifice pleases him more, than when we testify our thankfulness towards him; as we have seen in Ps. l. 14: *Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows unto the Most Highest.* Also in Ps. cxvi. 12. *What reward shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? 'I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.* And the places that notably exalt this spiritual service are to be marked advisedly, that we mispend not our labour in trifles through an untoward zeal to serve God, as the greater part of men do; who, omitting the chief point, foolishly invent and add things to the service of God, and weary themselves in vain. The reason why the Holy Ghost so often repeateth the word *praise*, is that this duty of godliness should not be heartlessly performed, or lightly esteemed by us. Nevertheless, he at the same time obliquely reproves our slowness; for with such as are diligent and willing of themselves, less exhortation would serve. The end of the third verse, where he says, *for it is a sweet thing*, admits a twofold sense; either that God's name is a sweet thing, as in the former member he had said that God himself is good, or else because it is a sweet thing to sing to God. Notwithstanding, the word *נֶחֱמָה* signifies properly *comely* or *beautiful*; and here the general sense will suit the place best.

4 *For God hath, &c.*] He then brings together other reasons, from the government of the world, why men should

praise God. But as he could not be praised then by any other than the offspring of Abraham, to whom only he was known; the prophet propounds as matter for them that they were chosen to be God's peculiar people. And truly, that they only were adopted, and all the Gentiles passed over, was an incomparable benefit, wherewith it became them to have been ravished and inflamed to give him thanks. For by ascribing the praise of election to God, the prophet gives them plainly to understand that they were not preferred for their own virtue, but because their heavenly Father embraced them with his free love. Doubtless, he lays an obligation upon all men without exception, suffering his sun to rise daily upon the good and the bad, Matt. v. 45; but at that time he bound the children of Abraham to him by a closer bond, as he doth at this day, as many as he adopteth into his flock, and grafteth into the body of his only-begotten Son.

5 For I know that the Lord is great, and that our God is above all gods.

6 The Lord doeth all things that he listeth in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and in all depths.

7 Making the clouds to come up from the uttermost of the earth; he maketh lightnings unto rain, bringing the wind out of his secret places.

5 *For I know that, &c.*] Here is given a general description of God's mighty power, that all the Israelites may the better know that the God whom they serve is the maker of the whole world, and governeth all things at his pleasure, and that there is none other anywhere to be found. Nevertheless, he says not that he himself only knew the greatness of God, as though he meant to exclude all other men; but rather, from his own feeling, he stirs up all others to be as heedful as himself, that being awakened, they may know that which is plain to be seen of all. For although no man comprehend God's immensity, yet is his glory, so far forth as is expedient, apparent enough to us, so that all the world is without just pretence of ignorance. For whosoever enjoys the sight of heaven and earth, how can he, without extreme wickedness, pass over the founder of them with his eyes shut? But that he might stir us up the more effectually, he allures us, by his own example, to the knowledge of God's glory; or rather he chastises our sluggishness, in that we are not heedful enough in considering it. By the second member we gather more certainly what I touched upon just



now, that the prophet's purpose is to hold the Israelites in the service and fear of the one God; because the same God who had made the covenant with their fathers, is the very maker of heaven and earth. For after he has named him *the Lord*, immediately he adds that he is the God of Israel. Whence it follows that as many as depart from this God, falsely pretend the name of God; even as at this day the Jews and Turks do, who though they profess themselves to worship God, the creator of the world, yet do but trifle. For where men depart from the Law and the Gospel, all their boasting of religion is but a denial of the true God. Not without cause, therefore, does the prophet clothe God with that special title, that the Israelites may hold themselves to the true doctrine of the law. If by אֱלֹהִים you understand the counterfeit gods of the heathen, it will be a concession; for improperly he would compare God to vain forgeries, and things of nought. And the meaning will be, that God's greatness excelleth so far, that it bringeth to nought whatsoever godhead is feigned beside. Nevertheless, he seems to comprise the angels, as I have said heretofore. For though there appear somewhat of the divine nature in them, as they are heavenly powers and principedoms, yet does God himself surmount them, so as to keep them in awe, that they obscure not his greatness.

6 *The Lord doeth all, &c.*] This is God's immeasurable greatness that he has made mention of; not only that he hath once made heaven and earth, but also that he ruleth all things at his pleasure. For as for them that grant God to be the maker of the world, and yet imagine him to sit idle in heaven, and to have no care at all of the world, they wickedly rob him of his power. But yet this gross imagination possesses a great number of men. If a man ask them whether they think that God sleepeth or no, truly they will say no. And yet when they imagine that he layeth the reins loose on fortune's neck, they leave him but a shadowy power, which wants due effect; whereas the scripture teaches us that it is workful, insomuch that all the world is ruled at his pleasure. For the prophet affirms here expressly that God careth for every part of the world, so that nothing may happen blindly or by casualty. Men think, commonly, that they advance God gloriously when they make a little babbling about his universal providence. But the distinction of the heaven, the earth, and the waters, betokens a particular care. Nevertheless, the chief weight is in the word יִשְׁפֹּט. The Holy Ghost avoucheth that God doeth what it pleaseth him. As for the confused government whereof they prate commonly, it tends only to this

end, that God, without an effort of thought, continueth the order of the world. And so by this means his will is reduced to nothing. For if he willeth, then hath he both a design of his own, and a determinate motive. Whence is gathered his special providence, which distributes its force to the ruling of every several part of the world, so that nothing happens by chance, but all things, yea, even those that seem most casual, are ruled and directed by his secret purpose. And although it belong not to us to discuss why he will have those things done which are repugnant to our understanding, yet, unless we would overturn the first principles of godliness, this must remain as an impregnable truth, that nothing happens but what God hath determined and decreed. And although his will be hidden from us, yet it behoves us to have the same in reverent admiration as the fountain of all justice and uprightness, because nothing is more reasonable than that it should have the chief place of estimation among us. If the readers think good, let them seek more on this subject from Ps. cxv.

7 *Making the clouds, &c.*] The prophet touches one or two particulars, whereby it may the better be understood that nothing is moved of itself, saving so far forth as it is guided by the purpose and hand of God. Therefore, as our understanding is not able to comprehend the thousandth part of God's works, the prophet does but take a few out of many examples here, wherein he would have that thoroughly weighed which he taught concerning the heavenly providence. He says that *the clouds are lifted up from the uttermost parts of the earth*, because the vapours that rise out of the earth, being heaped together, at length form clouds. But who would think it would come to pass that the vapours which we see mounting up afar off, should presently darken the sky, and hang heavily over our heads? It is, therefore, a signal proof of God's mighty power, that the thin vapours which steam up should within a little while after overcast the whole air. The prophet adds (and this avails not a little to increase the miracle) that lightnings are mixed with the rain, things which are utterly contrary. If this mingling of the fire and water were not known by experience, who would not say it were an incredible portent? The same argument applies to the winds. For although it be certain that the winds are engendered naturally, and philosophers shew the origin of them, yet is the manifold motion of the winds a wonderful work of God. Nevertheless, he not only proclaims God's mighty power in such sort as the philosophers grant it, but he means that there falls not a drop of rain from the sky which is not poured out by

the determined ordinance of God. All men confess that God is the author of rain, and likewise of thunder and the winds, because he hath once established this order in nature: but the prophet goes further here, namely, that as often as it rains, it happens not by the blind instinct of nature, but because God hath so appointed it, to whom it belongs at his discretion to wrap the clear sky in clouds, and to restore the pure light by dispelling the darkness.

8 He smote the first-born of Egypt, from man to beast.

9 He sent forth tokens and wonders in the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

10 He smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;

11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

12 And gave their land for an heritage, *even for* an heritage unto Israel his people.

8 *He smote the first-born, &c.*] Again he treats of God's peculiar benefits, whereby he had bound his church and his elect people to him. For as he directs his talk to the faithful only, he sets down this as the chief point of God's praises; that he hath adopted a small number out of all mankind, and also that he hath set himself in their defence, even against great kingdoms and powerful nations. For all the miracles that God wrought, as well in Egypt as in Canaan, were so many records of his fatherly love towards his chosen people. And whereas he puts the slaying of the first-born of Egypt in the foremost place, he keeps not the order of history, but propounds a notable example, whereby it may appear how precious the welfare of the church was to God, in respect whereof he spared not so great and powerful a people. The effect is, that God's mighty power, together with his grace, was abundantly witnessed in the deliverance of his people.

10 *He smote great nations, &c.*] He comes down to the end of the deliverance. For God brought not his people out of Egypt to forsake them by and by in their wandering pilgrimage, but to settle them in the promised heritage. The prophet therefore declares here that God's favour was apparent, and also the tireless perseverance of his gracious goodness, in that after he had once reached out his hand to the children of Abraham, he led them forth thus far, and continued exerting his power, until they enjoyed the pro-

mised land. And he extols God's power, because they obtained not the quiet possession of the land but after many slaughters. And he illustrates God's goodness by this circumstance, that he preferred an obscure band before puissant kings and strong nations. He mentions the two kings Sihon and Og, not because they were the mightiest of all, but because they were more dreaded than the others, as their countries were so closed in that there was no coming at them, especially when the people were not yet inured to war. And, as the crowning of God's bounty, the prophet adds that the Israelites obtained secure possession of the land. It is no less a virtue, says one, to keep, than to get. Therefore, as the Israelites were environed with most deadly enemies, God's mighty power appeared most of all in that they were neither destroyed nor driven out; which might have happened a hundred times, if they had not been firmly seated in their possession.

13 Thy name, O Lord, *endureth* for ever: O Lord, thy memorial is from generation to generation.

14 For the Lord shall judge his people, and have remorse upon his servants.

13 *Thy name, O Lord, &c.*] Although there are many reasons why God's name ought always to be held in highest honour in the world, yet the prophet treats here of the eternal praise which he deserveth and purchaseth to himself by preserving his church. For presently there is added a rendering of the cause; namely, that God shall judge his people. And truly, as the whole world is a theatre of God's goodness, wisdom, righteousness, and mighty power, so is the church the more conspicuous part of it, even, as it were, the orchestra. And the nearer God approacheth us, and the more familiarly he communicateth his benefits to us, the more heedfully does it become us to exercise ourselves in meditating on them. Now as the term *judge*, among the Hebrews, contains all the parts of a just and lawful government, I expound the future tense as conveying a continued act, as it often is wont to be; as though the prophet had said that God will evermore preside over and guard his people, and therefore that the welfare of the godly is in safe keeping, inasmuch as God taketh charge of it. Unless, perchance, the prophet have set down the future time purposely, that we may learn to suspend our hope in afflictions, and not to be dismayed if at any time it seem to be neglected and forsaken of God; because, howsoever he hide his help for a time, yet, after he seeth his servants

brought low enough, he sheweth himself their defender in due season. Neither does this exposition offend me, because it is likely that the prophet alludes to the saying of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36. In whose words also he cites it: for Moses, minding to assuage the sorrow which the people would suffer by reason of God's scourges, declares that God would judge his people, so that he would relieve and defend them when they were miserably afflicted. That does he now (whosoever he was that was author of this Psalm) apply to the continual behoof of the church; declaring that God will never suffer the church to perish utterly, by the abolishing whereof he would cease to be king. As for changing the time of the verb into the preterite, as though God had defended his people against the Egyptians, it is a poor device, and alien from the text of Moses, and of this Psalm. For the word *נָחַם*, signifies as well *to have remorse* as also *to take comfort*. Whichever way you take it the sense will be perfectly applicable. For as often as God becometh reconciled to his church, although there can no changeableness happen to him, yet appears there a change in the thing itself. Therefore, he will be said to have repented, when he beginneth to deal more gently with his church, which he had justly punished in his displeasure. And he is said to take comfort or pleasure in his people, when, remembering his everlasting covenant, he pliieth them with continual mercies after he hath chastised them for a moment; according as he says in Isaiah, liv. 8. The effect is this, that God's displeasure towards the faithful lasts but awhile, and that when he punisheth their offences, he remembereth his mercy in the midst of anger, according as Habakkuk teaches, iii. 2. And thus is God portrayed to us under the figure of man, because he putteth on a fatherly affection, when he taketh home his children that had deserved to be thrust out of doors; since he cannot be severed from his own bowels. As if he should say that God is merciful to the faithful, because they are his children, and he will not make himself childless; and finally, that he is therefore easy to be reconciled, because it is his delight to cherish those tenderly, whom he acknowledgeth as his children.

15 The images of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of man's hands.

16 They have mouth, and shall not speak: they have eyes, and shall not see.

17 They have ears, and shall not hear; yea, there is no breath in their mouth.

18 Let them that make them be like them : and whosoever trusteth in them.

19 Ye house of Israel, praise the Lord : ye house of Aaron, praise the Lord.

20 Ye house of Levi, praise the Lord : ye that fear the Lord, praise the Lord.

21 Praised be the Lord from out of Sion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

15 *The images of the, &c.*] Forasmuch as all this portion of the Psalm has been expounded in another place, it were unnecessary to stand long upon it; and the repetition would be painful to the readers. And therefore, I will but lightly touch upon the prophet's meaning in few words. For by taunting the stupidity of the heathen for not believing God to be near unto them, except they resorted to idols, he puts the Israelites in mind how gloriously they had been dealt with, that they might hold themselves more heedfully to the simple and pure service of God, and shun all heathenish superstitions. For in the end he concludes, that the more labour and cost idolaters bestow in serving their idols, so much the more grievous damnation do they earn. And doubtless his denunciation of such horrible vengeance against the worshippers of false gods is, that as many as are learned in God's law, might by their example be deterred from it. And whereas in Psalm cxv. he exhorts them to trust in God, here the prophet bids them praise God. And he joins the Levites to the house of Aaron, because of the two orders of priesthood. All other things else, agree with the said cxvth Psalm, save that in the last verse here, the prophet himself praises God with the rest of the congregation of the godly. And he says, *from out of Sion*, because as God had promised to hear the prayers of his servants from thence, and to shed abroad the sweet savour of his grace from thence, he therewith also ministered matter of praise. Also the reason is added; namely, because he dwelleth in Jerusalem. Whereby is not meant any gross or earthly thing, as though God were pent up in so contracted a dwelling; but it must be referred to his grace as it is felt. For experience taught them, that although his majesty fill heaven and earth, yet is he present to his servants in his power and grace.



## PSALM CXXXVI.

*The prophet tells us that God is defrauded of the due fruit of his benefits, if the faithful are not continually occupied in setting forth his praises. And, by commending his mercy in every one of his benefits, he teaches therewith that God is not praised aright, unless we acknowledge that whatsoever he bestoweth upon us is of free gift.*

1 Praise ye the Lord, because he is good : for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Praise ye the God of gods : for his mercy endureth for ever.

3 Praise ye the Lord of Lords : for his mercy endureth for ever.

4 Which hath done great wonders alone : for his mercy endureth for ever.

5 Which made the heavens skilfully : for his mercy endureth for ever.

6 Which hath stretched out the earth upon the waters : for his mercy endureth for ever.

7 Which hath made great lights : for his mercy endureth for ever.

8 The sun to have power by day : for his mercy endureth for ever.

9 The moon and the stars to have power by night : for his mercy endureth for ever.

1 *For his mercy endureth, &c.*] It may seem a vain babbling, in that he repeats this portion so oft in such short and concise sentences. But if odd intercalary verses are borne with, or rather obtain praise and applause, in heathen poets, this repetition ought not to appear absurd, being grounded upon very good reason. For though all men are forced to confess God's bounty to be the fountain of all good things, yet is not his free goodness acknowledged purely and fully ; to which, however, the scripture always assigns the highest place. Nay, Paul, speaking of that matter, Rom. iii. 23, by way of eminence, terms it the glory of God, generally : as if he should say, God, who deserveth most singular praise in all his works, desireth, notwithstanding, to be glorified chiefly in his mercy. And it is easy to gather from the

sacred words, that, by David's appointment, it was taken up for a custom in singing, that the Levites should sing alternately, *For his mercy endureth for ever*. For both Solomon observed this rite in the dedication of the temple, 2 Chron. vii. 3. 6, and also Jehoshaphat, in that solemn song of victory which is mentioned in the same book, xx. 21. But before the prophet come to the rehearsal of God's works, he commends his supreme godhead, and his sovereign authority. Not that, properly speaking, there is any spark of godhead without him, but because wheresoever men spy any part of his glory, they fancy some godhead separate from him, and wickedly sever God himself into parts: and, not content with that error, make to themselves gods of wood and stone. In a word, it is a perversity bred naturally in all men, to delight themselves in the diversity and multitude of gods. And therefore the prophet seems to have employed the plural number purposely, as well in the word אֱלֹהִים as in the word אֱדֹנָי; for, word for word, it is thus: *Praise ye the lords of lords*: as if he should say, the perfect fulness of all lordship is to be found in God alone.

4 *Which hath done, &c.*] By this name he marks all God's works, from the least to the greatest, that he may awaken us to wonder at them. For, by reason of our sluggishness, they fall into disesteem, when, notwithstanding, on each of them there are engraven notable marks, as well of God's incredible wisdom as also of his truth. And he asserts that God alone hath done and doeth whatsoever is worthy of admiration, that we may know that not the smallest particle of his praise can be transferred to another, without intolerable blasphemy, because, when we have viewed heaven and earth throughout, we shall not find anywhere any specimen of godhead that we may join with him as his mate or rival. Afterwards he commends God's wisdom in one particular; namely, that the heavens are set together with such skill, that even they themselves cry out, that by wondrous means they were garnished with such surpassing beauty. From thence he comes down to the earth, that we may learn to magnify this notable and glorious work of God also, in spreading out the bare and dry surface of the earth upon the waters. For as the elements are of a spherical shape, the waters would naturally cover the earth, if they were not kept back by their appointed barriers, because it was God's will to give mankind a dwelling-place: and this the philosophers are compelled to insert among their principles. Therefore this spreading out of the earth, and this void space which is not overwhelmed with water, are worthily accounted among the chief of God's miracles. And it is also at the same time

ascribed to God's grace: for there was no reason why he should displace the waters from their proper seat, but because of his infinite goodness he purposed to provide for men.

7 *Which hath made great lights, &c.*] Seeing that Moses calls the sun and the moon two great lights, I doubt not but the prophet has followed this manner of speech: and therefore that which he adds immediately after concerning the stars, is, as it were, an appendage. And though the other planets excel the moon in magnitude, yet not without cause is it named the second light, by reason of the manifest effect of it; for it was not the Holy Ghost's meaning to teach astrology. But as he was about to set forth a doctrine that should be common, even to the most uninstructed and incapable, he spake popularly by the mouths of Moses and the prophets, lest any man should excuse himself under pretence of difficulty; even as we see that men seek nothing more greedily than pretence of ignorance, if the thing treated of be too high and abstruse for them. Although, therefore, the planet Saturn is larger than the moon, yet, as it is not apparent to men's eyes, by reason of the longer distance of it from us, the Holy Ghost chose rather, after a sort, to lisp, than to block up the way of learning to the vulgar and unlearned. Of the same stamp, also, is that which the prophet adds therewith, that God hath divided the courses of the sun and the moon in order, so that he hath set the one over the day, and the other over the night: not that they possess any dominion, but because God's wonderful economy shines forth in this distribution. And, assuredly, when the sun illumines the earth with his refulgence by day, and the moon and the stars by night, they yield, so to speak, reverential homage to God.

10 Which smote the Egyptians in their first-born: for his mercy endureth for ever:

11 And brought out Israel from the midst of them: for his mercy endureth for ever:

12 In a strong hand and a stretched-out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.

13 Which divided the Red sea into divisions: for his mercy endureth for ever:

14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:

15 And overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever:

16 And led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.

10 *Which smote the Egyptians in their first-born, &c.*] Some translate the letter א, *with their first-born*, but the former translation seems to flow better. Nevertheless, except a sermon would be agreeable, it were superfluous to delay the readers here with many words: for here is nothing which has not been treated of before. And it is truly said by him that the Egyptians were smitten in their first-born, because though they were often put in fear with the other plagues, yet did they not cease to rage in their stubbornness, till this last plague subdued or quelled them, so that they gave place to God. And because he purposed not to reckon up all the miracles one by one in order, he comprised the whole in one word, saying that the people were brought out of the midst of Egypt with *a strong hand, and a stretched-out arm*: for beset as they were on all sides, there was no way for them to escape, but by the wonderful working of God. The similitude of the *arm stretched out*, is very apt: for we are not wont to stretch out our arm but when we attempt some arduous matter. The meaning therefore is, that God used no light hand, but put forth his power after an unwonted manner in delivering his people.

13 *Which divided the Red sea, &c.*] Of the word סוף, I have spoken heretofore, and therefore I made no scruple to translate it *the Red sea*. And because the prophet speaks of *divisions* or *parts* in the plural number, some of the Hebrews conjecture that there were more passages than one, in conformity with their custom of wasting words upon matters unknown, and of adulterating the whole scripture with their glosses. Now though such fooleries deserve to be laughed at, yet it is meet also to execrate them: for no doubt the rabbins were led to this by the wiliness of Satan, thus to mar the credit of the scriptures. Moses declares openly and plainly that the waters stood in heaps on either side, whereby we gather that there was but one continuous space. But as the people marched in troops, and not one after another, by reason of the breadth of the way wherein the men and women marched at ease with their household and cattle, the prophet appositely terms them *division* in respect of the men: for this circumstance of beholding the sea-gulfs dried far and wide, so that there was clear way for the people to march forward together in their troops, not a little aggrandized the gracious act of God. This also makes further to the confirmation of the favour, that soon after Pharaoh was overwhelmed: for the difference of the cases

shewed that it happened not by any mysterious motion of nature, that the one perished, and the other passed through safe and sound. This difference therefore made God's mercy apparent in saving his people. That which he touches upon in one word, namely, that *God guided his people in the wilderness*, has a large scope: for there needed many and various miracles that should go through forty years in a place that was drougthy and wanted all the necessaries of life. To this place, therefore, must be transferred whatsoever records of God's goodness and mighty power are reckoned up by Moses; as that he fed his famished people with heavenly food, that he commanded water to flow out of the rock, that he sheltered them under a cloud from the heat of the sun, that he gave them a token of his presence in the pillar of fire, that he kept their raiment whole, that he defended them and their little ones under the covert of leaves when they wandered as exiles, and innumerable other things which will occur to the readers.

17 Which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

18 And slew mighty kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:

20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:

21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever:

22 For an heritage to Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever:

23 Which was mindful of us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:

24 And delivered us from our oppressors: for his mercy endureth for ever.

25 Which giveth food unto all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

26 Praise ye the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

23 *Which was mindful of us in our low estate.*] The six verses that are taken out of the last Psalm, I touch not at all. The other also, forasmuch as they need no long ex-

position, I will but briefly run over. The prophet declares no more but that as God hath not ceased to help his people continually from time to time, there was no age destitute of that goodness which had been extended towards the fathers. And surely to rescue the people when they were almost at the last cast with miseries, was a more notable proof of his gracious favour, than to have cherished them in safety always after one rate: for necessity itself opens our eyes, and rouses our minds. Again, as God delivereth his servants so often, it follows that he pardoneth their sins. In the end he extends God's fatherly providence without exception, not only to all mankind, but also to all living things, so that it is no marvel though he is so provident and beneficent a father towards his elect, since he grudges not to provide even for oxen and asses, ravens and sparrows. Seeing, then, that men do far excel brute beasts, and that among men also there is great difference, not from their own worthiness, but from God's adoption, the prophet reasons from the less likelihood to the greater, that God's incomparable grace towards those of his household cannot be extolled enough.

### PSALM CXXXVII.

*As the appointed service of God was suspended during the captivity of Babylon, the prophet, taking upon him the person of the whole church, complains of the enemies' scoffs, which were levelled at the sacred name of God, and, putting magnanimous expressions into the mouth of the exiles, raises them up to hope of deliverance.*

1 By the rivers of Babylon there we sat; even we wept when we remembered thee, O Sion.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst of it.

3 Then they that had taken us prisoners required of us the words of singing, and mirth in our hangings up, Sing unto us one of the songs of Sion.

4 How shall we sing a song of the Lord in a strange land?

1 *By the rivers of Babylon, &c.]* I have told you before that as the prophets are wont to speak of things to come, after another manner; those persons are too grossly deceived who think that David warned the people of their future captivity, by the spirit of prophecy. Now the subject treated



of here, is a thing known and experienced. And what the prophet's purpose was, must be explained in few words. For that sorrowful abandonment might occasion faith and religion to fade among the Jews. And so easy is it to fall into superstition and corruptions, when we are mingled with the ungodly; they were in hazard of lapsing into heathenism among the Babylonians. Besides this, their captivity and hard bondage, and the indignities they were fain to suffer there, might cast down the hearts of the faithful. Whosoever, then, was the author of the Psalm, he endites a form of lamentation, that by sighing and praying they might cherish the hope of the salvation they had despaired of. Nevertheless, there is also another object to be marked; for he exhorts them that they should not cease from exercising godliness in a heathen land, nor pollute themselves with the defilements of the Gentiles. With this view he calls down upon the children of Edom, such vengeance as they deserved, and cries out that Babylon, whose transitory felicity made the whole world faint, is miserable, and near her destruction. Now how convenient, or rather necessary it was for the minds of the godly to be stayed up that they might not shrink, the long continuance of the time alone sufficiently shews. For they must inevitably have habituated themselves to the polluted manners of the Gentiles, had they not been inspired with wonderful strength of mind through a period of seventy years. Therefore, by the word *sat*, he denotes the long time of captivity; as if he should say, the people had not only been haled away from the sight of their country, but as it were imprisoned in the grave. The demonstrative force in the adverb of place, *there*, is very significant, for by it he places the readers in the presence of the subject. And though the loveliness of the country, irriguous as it was, might well assuage their heaviness, yet he says that the faithful, were in continual mourning as long as they dwelt there. And therefore he uses the particle *וְ*, which avails to enhance the matter; as if he should say, the faithful in whom the pure fear of God flourished, were not so inebriated with the charms of Babylon, that they despised their own inheritance. At the same time, however, he shews that they neither were so hardened by their miseries, that they perceived not the just chastisement of God, nor strove stubbornly against him. For their weeping was a sign as well of humility and repentance, as of sorrow and heaviness. Which appears more evidently by their remembering Sion, whereby he gives us to understand that they were not addicted to earthly pleasures, but rather were

devoted to the service of God ; for God had set his sanctuary like a banner upon mount Sion, that the beholding thereof might keep them in the assured hope of deliverance. Therefore, though the faithful passed a long and lingering sojourn in a charming and fruitful country, which might, with its enticements, corrupt irresolute minds ; yet they say that tears, which are said to dry up quickly, gushed incessantly from their eyes, because they were debarred from the wonted service of God, and saw themselves justly bereaved of the promised inheritance.

2 *We hanged our harps, &c.*] He bewails the interruption of that mirth which God had commanded to be used in his temple. For we know that the Levites were enjoined the office of singing, that they might be as leaders and masters to the whole people in this exercise of devotion. If any one ask to what purpose they carried their harps with them so far from their country ; the prophet mentions this also as a signal evidence of faith and godly zeal, that whereas the Levites were stripped of all their worldly goods, yet they carefully kept their harps as a precious household stuff, to be applied again to their former use when time should serve. And certainly it is likely that the true worshippers of God held in highest estimation the reliques of God's service, and took great heed for the preservation of them till the time of restitution should come. Moreover, by *the willows* he seems to betoken that the banks which were planted with them for coolness, were delectable. The prophet, therefore, denies that any shady retreats, however pleasant, had power to dispel the grief that had sunk too deep in the hearts of the faithful, to allow admission to any worldly comfort or delight. Assuredly, the suitableness of the place, as they sat upon the river's bank, sheltered with the shade of trees, might have provoked and allured them to take their harps, and soothe their grief with singing. But the prophet shews that their spirits were too heavily oppressed with a sense of the divine displeasure, to admit of their beguiling them with unsubstantial solaces. Nay, the prophet goes still further ; he says that they were bereft of true and holy joy. For though it were neither godly nor wise to exasperate their anguish, yet it is no wonder that they deferred their national songs to their return, since God's chastisements enforced them to lamentation and mourning.

3 *Then they that, &c.*] No doubt the Israelites were roughly and severely handled under that barbarous tyranny. But yet they mean that the bitterest of all their crowning

misery was, that the conquerors scornfully triumphed over them, yea, and also scoffed at them, and that because their purpose was not so much to wound the afflicted exiles, as to hurl blasphemies at God. For the Babylonians had no desire to hear the holy songs, neither peradventure would they have suffered God's name to have been openly praised among them; but their language was ironical, as if in bitter scorn they boasted that the Levites, who erewhile were wont to chant the holy songs to the echo, were now become mute; as if they said, Is your God dead, to whom ye were wont to sing heretofore? For if your music delight him, why do you surcease from it? The interpreters torture the latter member of the verse, in all sorts of ways. For some derive the word תוללינו, from the verb ללל, which signifies *to howl*, and translate it *mirth*, instead of *our howlings*. Others translate it *hangings up of mirth*. Some also take it for a participle, deriving it from the verb הלל, which signifies *to be mad*; as though it had been said, *being mad at us*. But as in the last verse he put the verb תלינו, which is the root of this noun, for *to hang up*, the translation I have adopted seemed to me to be the simpler.

4 *How shall we sing, &c.*] Here the prophet arms the faithful with a magnanimous and noble answer against the proud vaunting of the Babylonians; namely, that they abstain from the songs of God, and also from the sacrifices of the law, in a polluted land. For though the Chaldeans thought the Jews immoveably fixed in the place of their captivity, yet the prophet, by calling it a strange land, intimates that they are but as sojourners there for a time. He means chiefly, however, that Chaldea is unworthy of so great honour as to have God's praises sounded there. It is, indeed, undoubted that the children of God, wheresoever they lived, were always sojourners in the world. But as the land of Canaan was their holy rest, the prophet with good reason says that they were foreigners and sojourners in a strange land. And thus he bids them always to be ready and girt for their return, covertly confirming the prophecy of Jeremiah, whereby the time of their captivity was foreset, Jer. xxv. 11, and xxix. 10, that they might never forget their country. Meanwhile, he arms the faithful with constancy, that they should not mingle themselves with the Babylonians for fear of any threats: even as in these days, although the faithful may be in great jeopardy under the papacy, if they are not conformable to the accustomed usages, yet by this interval the Holy Ghost dis severeth them from all impious compliance. For to the French, the Italians, and the English, who love and follow true religion,

even their own country is truly a strange land, as long as they dwell under that tyranny. Nevertheless, there is some difference between us and the people of old time; for at that time it was not lawful to serve God anywhere than in one place. But now, wheresoever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is God's temple, provided that, separated from all profession of idolatry, they keep themselves in the pure worshipping of God. Nevertheless, the prophet meant not, by these words, to damp all zeal of praising God; but rather, to exhort the afflicted minds to patience, until the liberty of serving God might be restored to their nation. As if he should say, We are bereft of the temple and the sacrifices, and driven out of our country, and we wander in a polluted land: what should we therefore do, but mourn and sigh for our promised deliverance, as often as we remember our casting off?

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget me.

6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember not thee; if I lift not up Jerusalem above the head of my mirth.

7 Lord remember the children of Edom, which in the day of Jerusalem said, rase it, rase it, even unto the very foundations in it.

8 O daughter of Babylon, which art wasted; blessed shall he be that payeth thee the reward that thou hast rendered unto us.

9 Blessed shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stone.

5 *If I forget thee, &c.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence; whereupon also it is easy to gather what he meant then. For the worshippers of God avouch, yea, even with imprecation, that the remembrance of the holy city shall always be engraven on their hearts, and never be obliterated whatsoever betide them. And because mention is here made of singing and musical instruments, the prophet borrows the form of his imprecation therefrom; namely, that his hand may forget her cunning, and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, or to his fauces. The whole comes to this, that the faithful must not be so much grieved for their own inconveniences, but that they must be more sorely touched for the common misfortune of the church. For the zeal of God's house ought of right to bear the palm

in our hearts, so that it may tower above all our private affections. Some interpret the second member thus; If it be not my chief joy to see Jerusalem in a flourishing state again. Others thus; Never will joy enter into my soul until the restitution of the church make me glad. But in my judgment the prophet comprehends both together: nor, in truth, can the one be severed from the other. For if we advance Jerusalem to be the chief subject of our mirth, then will the highest degree of our mirth grow out of the welfare and prosperous state of Jerusalem; which cannot come to pass, except the sorrow that is conceived for her adversity, close the gate upon all heathenish and worldly joys.

7 *Lord, remember, &c.*] Since vengeance was at hand to all the bordering nations that had conspired the destruction of Jerusalem, no doubt by the figure synecdoche the prophet designates them all under the children of Edom; either because they had surpassed all the rest in the barbarousness of their hatred, or else because cruelty was less tolerable against kinsfolk and brethren; for they were the offspring of Esau, and when the people of Israel destroyed all before them with the sword, they spared the Idumeans by the commandment of God, Deut. ii. 1. It was therefore more than the blindness of brutal rage to call in the Babylonians to destroy their brethren, or to be as bellows to kindle their cruelty the more. But it is to be marked, that the prophet does not here rashly break out into cursing and banning, but is God's herald to confirm former prophecies. For God by Ezekiel, xv. 13, and by Jeremiah, xlix. 7, had foretold that he would take vengeance of the Edomites. And Abdias in his eleventh chapter, alleges a reason more distinctly, which answers to this place; namely, because they had conspired with the Babylonians. But we know it was God's purpose to sustain the minds of his people with this comfort in their dismal distress. For otherwise the election of Jacob might seem to have been disannulled, if the offspring of Esau might have torn his children in pieces so outrageously with impunity. The prophet therefore, by the instinct of the Holy Ghost, beseeches God to shew in very deed that this was not prophesied in vain. And whereas he says, *Lord, remember*, he puts the godly in mind of the promise, that being assured of God's defence, they might patiently and calmly wait for deliverance. For it was not lawful to desire any other vengeance than God had promised; and that too against such as were reprobate and incurable. For to all others, however set against us, we must wish a sound mind and repentance. According to the usual manner of the

scripture, he calls *the day of Jerusalem* the time of visitation, whose end God had foreset.

8 *O daughter of Babylon, &c.*] Now the prophet with the eyes of faith beholds the hidden judgment of God, even as the apostle, Heb. xi. 1, wisely calls faith the beholding of things hidden. Though, therefore, it were incredible that any mishap could befall so mighty a monarchy as Babylon was at that time, and that all men thought its strength impregnable, yet the prophet beholds the fall and destruction of it in the mirror of God's word. And the same he bids all the faithful to do, that through assurance of the heavenly prophecies, they may as it were look down in scorn upon the pride of that accursed city. Now if we learn to conceive assurance and hope out of God's promises, howsoever low we may be cast down, yet may we lift up our heads out of hell, and glory that we are blessed even in extreme misery, but that our enemies are doomed to destruction, provided that God's spirit temper all our affections with his own uprightness. Moreover, when he avouches those to be blessed who shall render vengeance to the Babylonians, he means not that God was well pleased with the service of the Persians and Medes, whom ambition and insatiable covetousness, yea, and wicked spite, moved to make war; but as that war was waged as it were under God's banner, the prophet says it shall have the wished-for success. For as God had determined to be revenged on Babylon, he blessed Cyrus and Darius, even as, on the other hand, by parity of reason, Jeremiah, xlviii. 10, pronounces them cursed that shall do the work of God negligently, that is to say, who shall not yield their service to God with all their heart in wasting and destroying, when he hireth them to be his executioners. And though it seem a cruel thing, when he wishes their tender and as yet unoffending babes to be dashed and brained against the stones, yet as he speaks not from his own suggestion, but fetches his words from God's mouth, it is but a heralding of God's just judgment; even as when the Lord avoucheth that what measure each man has used towards others, the same shall be measured again to himself, Matt. vii. 2: but Isaiah, xiii. 16, had uttered a special prophecy concerning Babylon, in harmony with which the prophet now sings; Behold, God hath sharpened the iron, and bent the bow, he sendeth forth the Medes and the Persians, who shall not desire silver and gold; they shall only thirst for blood, &c.



## PSALM CXXXVIII.

*David, calling to mind how signally he had always been helped by God, having experienced as well his goodness as his faithfulness, first, incites and addresses himself to thanksgiving in consideration of these proofs ; and secondly, promises himself the continuance of God's beneficence as heretofore, because God is always like himself. And if he happen to be in jeopardy, he puts himself in hope of a joyful deliverance.*

[*David's.*]

1 I will praise thee with my whole heart, before the gods will I sing unto thee.

2 I will worship thee at the temple of thine holiness, and sing unto thy name because of thy mercy and truth, for thou hast magnified thy name above all things by thy word.

3 In the day that I called unto thee, then heardst thou me, and hast multiplied me strength in my soul.

4 Let all kings of the earth praise thee, O Lord : for they have heard the words of thy mouth.

5 And let them sing in the ways of the Lord : because the glory of the Lord is great.

1 *I will praise thee, &c.*] According as David had been adorned with memorable benefits at God's hand, so promises he that he will be thankful after no common manner. But as hypocrites vitiate and defile this sacrifice with feigned and empty bawling, he adds at the same time that he will give God thanks, not only with his lips, but also with an unfeigned heart. For we have seen in Psalm xii: 3, that *the whole heart* is taken for a pure or unfeigned heart, and is opposed to a double heart. Furthermore, because the word אֱלֹהִים is transferred sometimes to kings, and sometimes to angels, either of them will suit the present passage very well. David promises public thanksgiving. Now since the assembly of holy men is as it were a heavenly theatre, we know it is adorned with a throng of angels, and cherubims therefore encircled the ark of the covenant, that the faithful might understand that the angels are present as witnesses, as often as they came to the sanctuary to worship God. And as the princes lead the foremost rank, it will not be unreasonable to take what is

spoken here of them, as also in Psalm cvii. 32; *Praise the Lord in the assembly of the elders*, that is, in a famous and honourable assembly. Nevertheless, I prefer the former sense, because the faithful, as often as they come into God's presence, being as it were separated from the world, mount into heaven to join the angels, according as Paul to the Corinthians, in treating of order and propriety, admonishes them to behave themselves reverently in the public assembly at least for the angels' sakes. And it was God's will that the same should be represented in old time under the figure of the cherubim, that he might give the faithful a visible symbol of his presence. By and by also follows the explanation of it, where he says, *I will worship at the temple of thine holiness*. For he means that he will not only be thankful in secret, but also come to the sanctuary, according to the commandment of the law, that he may encourage others to follow his example. For though he worshipped God spiritually, yet it behoved him to cast his eyes upon those outward symbols, which at that time were to the godly as vehicles to convey their minds upward. Moreover, he proposes to praise God on the ground of his mercy and truth. For though his mighty power and working also deserve their commendation, yet ought nothing to spur us more keenly to praise his name, than his free goodness, because he opens our mouths to set forth his praises, by dealing bounteously with us. But as we taste not his mercy, or at least take not hold of it with a lively feeling of mind, without his word, there is added *faithfulness* or *truth*. And this coupling of mercy and truth, as I have told you often before, is to be marked advisedly. For howsoever God shew himself beneficent by his deeds, yet, if his doctrine shine not before us, our dulness will be an impediment that his goodness cannot pierce into our hearts. And his mercy is placed foremost, inasmuch as God doth not shew himself true in any other respect than because he hath bound himself to us by his free promise. And certainly his inestimable mercy is clearly seen in this, that he preventeth such as are strangers to him, and vouchsafeth to speak to them familiarly, that he may allure them to him. In the end of the verse, some supply the copula in the term *word*, and translate it thus; Thou hast magnified thy name and thy word above all things; which, as it is insipid, is justly rejected by learned interpreters, who nevertheless, in my judgment, themselves also resort to a forced exposition, translating it thus; Thou hast magnified thy name upon all thy sayings. But I have no doubt David proclaims that God's name surpasses all things with the highness thereof, and also defines the special means whereby

God hath advanced his name; namely, because he performeth faithfully what he had promised freely. And surely as we are blind to God's benefits by reason of our own dulness, the best way to quicken us, is, when God speaketh to us by his own voice, and in the end, by the effect, ratifieth and sealeth the grace he hath promised.

3 *In the day that, &c.*] Though God often prevent our prayers, and, as it were, present himself to us when we are asleep, yet, commonly, he moveth those that are his to praying, by the instinct of his Spirit, that he may the better set forth his grace, by making them know that they prayed not in vain, nor without profit. Justly, therefore, does David gather that his emerging out of danger could not seem to have happened by chance, because it appeared openly that he had heard him. This, then, is the only thing, that our prayers shew God's grace more nearly to us. In the second part of the verse many also supply the copula, thus; Thou hast multiplied me and strength in my soul; but inaptly, as the meaning of the words flows very well without adding anything, whether you read it as I have translated it already, or you prefer to read thus; Thou hast multiplied me with strength in my soul. The effect is, that being exhausted with adversity he recovered new strength of mind. Unless perhaps it is more agreeable to resolve it thus; Thou hast multiplied me; that is, Thou hast blessed me, whence strength is in my soul.

4 *Let all kings of, &c.*] By these words he declares that the grace which he had experienced shall be renowned far and wide, so that it shall be spread over all the world. Furthermore, in saying that even kings heard the words of God's mouth, he means not that they are so rightly instructed in religion that they ought to be grafted into the body of the church, but that it shall be everywhere known that he was wonderfully preserved of God, for no other cause but that he was anointed king by his command. Although, therefore, the bordering kings were not a whit the better for that heavenly oracle, yet its being known by all men everywhere that David was called of God, availed greatly to the commendation of God's grace. And truly, since, during so many years, in which Saul persecuted him most fiercely, even to the death, he always boasted himself to fight under God's banner, it could not be unknown that he reigned by the good pleasure and calling of God. Such then was the proof afforded of God's grace, that it forced even heathen kings to acknowledge it in somewise.

6 For the Lord is high, and yet hath he an eye

to the lowly, and the Most High will know them afar off.

7 If I walk in the midst of trouble, thou shalt quicken me; thou shalt lay thine hand upon the anger of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

8 The Lord will reward upon me. Lord, thy mercy endureth for ever: thou wilt not forsake the work of thine hands.

6 *For the Lord is high, &c.*] In this verse he commends the providence of God, whereby the whole world is ruled. And it is above all things profitable to be known, that God neglecteth not our welfare. For though all of us grant it to be true, yet our fearfulness in every danger convicts us of distrust; for whosoever is thoroughly persuaded that he is cherished by God's fatherly loving-kindness, will not so easily be dismayed. Now though some expound *high* as if David should say that God sitteth on the heavenly throne to rule the whole world, yet, I think it put adversatively, as if he should say that God's *highness* is no hindrance, but that he regardeth the lowly and abject upon earth. Which same he confirms in the second member, where he says, that *the Most High discerneth them afar off*. Others read the word נָבִיחַ, in the accusative case, which sense also will not be inappropriate; as if he should say, God vouchsafeth not to look nearly upon the haughty and proud, but looketh down upon them in disdain, whereas he regardeth the little ones and the abjects, which to outward appearance seem to be removed far from him, no less than if they were hard by him. There are also that translate the word שָׁבַר, *to break in pieces*, as if it had been said that God, in cherishing the lowly, breaketh down those lofty giants that applaud themselves in their own prosperity. But as I apprehend David speaks not so subtly, the simple repetition of the sentence suffices me; namely, that though God be high, yet he regardeth the things which he seemeth to have no care of. So have we seen in Psalm cxiii. 5: *The Lord hath his dwelling on high, yet humbleth he himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth*. The sum of it is, that though the majesty of God be higher than all heavens, yet the vast interval withholds him not from ordering the whole world by his providence. High, therefore, is God, yet beholdeth he things afar off, so that he needeth not to change his place when he will come down to have regard of us. We are but despised and of no repute, and yet our wretched plight is no hindrance to God, but that he hath

regard of us. For it becomes us so to look up with admiration to his infinite glory, which surmounts all the heavens, in such manner as that we must not doubt but he cherisheth us as it were in his fatherly bosom. And fitly does David link these two members together; first, lest the majesty of God, striking terror into us, might take away the feeling of his goodness and loving-kindness; and secondly, lest his goodness, whereby he disdaineth not to condescend even to us, might diminish the reverence of his glory.

7 *If I walk, &c.*] Here David declares in whatwise he trusts to have God as his Saviour; namely, that, if need be, he will restore him to life when he is dead. Which passage is worthy to be noted. For such is the niceness of our flesh, that every one of us would fain live at ease out of the reach of danger. And therefore nothing is less endurable to us than to encounter the fear of death at close quarters. Nay rather, as soon as any danger presents itself to us, we shrink from it with the utmost horror, as though all that God could do, were not able to rid us out of our distresses. But the true rule of faith is, to behold the light of life even in the darkness of death, and to lean upon God's grace, as that which cannot only rid us of all inconveniences, but also revive us every moment in the midst of death; even as he bringeth his servants low with sundry afflictions, that he may wonderfully defend them, and so shew himself to be not only the maintainer of their life, but also their deliverer. Moreover, as the faithful have enemies always pressing hard upon them in this world, David avouches, that, let them practise what they can, yet shall he be safe through God's help. Hence, therefore, he teaches us that he derives his hope of life, that he is shielded by the stretched-out arm of God, which he knows to be invincible, and superior to all enemies. Whence it follows, that God so exercises his servants with continual warfare, as that, having one foot in their grave, they should flee fearfully under his wings, to enjoy rest there. Some take the word חַם, not for *anger* but *also*, reading it thus; Thou shalt also stretch forth thy hand upon mine enemies. Nevertheless, I have followed that which is most received, both because the sense is fuller, and has nothing forced in it.

8 *The Lord will reward, &c.*] The ambiguous signification of the word נָתַן makes the sentence doubtful. It signifies sometimes *to recompense*, yea, and generally *to bestow*: for it is often applied to benefits of free gift. But the words that follow in the text seem to require another signification. For as the reason is added, *Lord, thy mercies endure for ever; thou wilt not forsake the work*

*of thy hands*, it suits better thus ; The Lord shall bring to pass for me ; that is, shall proceed to shew that he regardeth my welfare ; and what he hath begun, he shall go through with to the last act. Therefore, as he was delivered by God's mercy, so believes he that the same shall continue still for ever, because God changeth not his nature, nor can divest himself of the goodness wherewith he is endued. And truly, that cheering hope may uphold us in our perils, we had need rivet our eyes on the goodness of God, whereon our welfare is founded. Now seeing that God, who is bound unto us by no obligation of right, promiseth of his own accord to take charge of us, David, with perfect propriety, gathers that his welfare shall not be liable to decay nor transitory, because God's goodness is everlasting. And this sentence he confirms in other words, namely, that it cannot be that God should throw by his work unfinished for weariness or sloth, as mortal men are wont to do. For David utters this in the same sense that Paul teaches us that God's gifts and callings are without repentance. For whereas men either abandon lightly what they have attempted foolishly, because they have been hurried away in another direction through inconstancy, or else are compelled by their own weakness to give over what they have essayed beyond their power ; no such thing can befall God, and therefore it is not to be feared that he should disappoint our hope in the midst of our race. For it is our iniquity and unthankfulness alone that break off the tireless and continual tenour of his grace. Whatsoever, therefore, we shall have embraced by steadfast faith, that will God never take away from us, nor suffer to slip from us. Neither does David say that God accomplisheth the welfare of his servants that he may give way to apathy, but rather that he may confirm his faith, and whet himself to praying. For whence comes it that the godly are thoughtful and afraid, but because, being conscious of their own frailness, they hang only upon God ? Meanwhile they lean upon his grace with perfect assurance, because they doubt not he will accomplish the thing he hath begun, even to the day of Christ, as the same Paul tells us, Phil. i. 6. And the improvement of this doctrine is this, that as often as we slip or waver, such reflections as this should occur to our minds : But God hath wrought in me the beginning of salvation, therefore he will pursue it to the end. Hereupon let us forthwith resort to prayer, that our own sluggishness shut not up the passage against the continual stream of God's grace, the fountain whereof is inexhaustible.



## PSALM CXXXIX.

*David, to cleanse his heart from hypocrisy by chasing away from him all the mists wherein the greater part of the world enwrap themselves, deceiving their own souls, declares in many words that nothing, howsoever secret, is hid from God's sight. And that he confirms from the creation of man. For if God have fashioned our shape in our mother's womb, and appointed to each member its proper power and office, it cannot be but that all our doings must be before his eyes. After he has from this consideration encouraged himself to the unfeigned fear of God, he protests that he utterly abjures the heathen and wicked despisers of God; and upon trust of this his innocence, whereof he is well assured in himself, he implores God not to forsake him in the midrace of his life.*

[To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.]

1 Lord, thou hast tried me, and thou knowest *me*.

2 Thou knowest my sitting down, and my rising up; thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou besettest my path, and my lying down, and understandest all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, thou knowest it wholly, O God.

5 Behind and before dost thou hold me strait, and thou hast laid thy hand upon me.

6 Wonderful is thy knowledge above me; it is so high that I cannot attain unto it.

1 *Lord, thou hast, &c.*] David protests that he comes not into God's presence thinking to avail anything by counterfeiting even as the hypocrites, who recklessly sport themselves under cover of the pretences with which they, as it were, veil themselves. But as he is persuaded that nothing is hid from God, he voluntarily discovers his whole heart to him, that he may take examination of him. To thee, O God, says he, belongeth it to spy out whatsoever lieth hid in me, neither can anything escape thee. Also he adds circumstances, whereby he signifies that no part of his life is darksome to God. Whether I rest, says he, or whether I walk, or whether I rise up, thou markest all my movings. Moreover, as *ו* signifies *a friend, or companion*, some interpreters translate it, *Thou understandest my near-*

*ness afar off*, which would square much better with the context if there were any similar instance to be met with. For it conveys, in a goodly figure, that the thing which is far off is nevertheless present before God's eyes as if it were near at hand. But as the other translation is more received, I durst not depart from it. Some translate the word מרחוק, *long ago*, in which signification it is taken also in other places; as if it had been said, Lord, whatsoever I conceive in my mind was known to thee long ago. But the other, which I have followed, pleases me better; that God is not confined to heaven, so that enjoying his ease, (as the Epicureans surmise,) he neglecteth men's affairs, but is near to us though we wander far from him. Because the word ורה signifies sometimes *to winnow*, and sometimes *to compass about*, it might conveniently be translated in the third verse, *Thou, O God, dost winnow my paths*: for it is a common metaphor to say that that is winnowed which is routed out of the dark, and brought into the light. Therefore let every man follow what he likes best. For the other sense which I have set down answers very well. In the end of the verse the interpreters vary likewise. For as the verb נס, in the conjugation Hiphil, as it is taken here, signifies *to make prosperous*, some are of opinion that thanks are yielded to God for giving lucky success to men's doings. But as David's purpose is other than to commend God's blessing, that signification has nothing to do with the present place. As forced also is that which others adduce, namely, *Thou hast made my ways to inure themselves*; as if he should say, It is God's benefit that he was endued with counsel. Therefore, though it be put in the conjugation Hiphil, yet I hesitate not to take it neutrally, in this sense: Lord, thou wert acquainted with my ways, so that they were familiarly known unto thee.

4 *For there is not, &c.*] These words admit a twofold sense: and therefore some construe them thus; Lord, before my speech be fashioned in my tongue, thou knowest what I will say: and others thus; Although I utter not a word, but go about to cover my intents with silence, nothing is hid from thee. As both these translations come to one point, let it be free to choose either of them. The effect is, that whereas among us the tongue is called the index of the mind, because each man communicates with his neighbours by speaking; God, who is the searcher of hearts, hath no need of speech. And the demonstrative particle, *Lo*, is added for the sake of emphasis; as if he had said that even the deepest recesses of the mind are brought before his eyes. In the fifth verse, many read, *Thou hast shaped me behind*

and before; but as this word צור, signifies often *to straiten*, I doubt not but David meant to say he was so hemmed and enclosed on all sides with God's sight, that it was in vain for him to labour to escape from him, which way soever he turned: for he that sees his way blocked up turns back his steps. But David says he is held in no less behind than before: and to the same purpose makes also the second member, *Thou hast laid thy hand upon me*. For insipidly do others wrest it to the shaping of man, that God should like a craftsman put to his hand to fashion his work: neither take they sufficient heed to the text. Wherefore, it is a much more correct interpretation, that God, as it were, by laying his hand upon men, holdeth them all in his sight, so that they cannot turn a line's breadth to right or left without his privity.

6 *Wonderful is thy, &c.*] We may take ונדב two ways; namely, that God's knowledge is wonderful, as appears by his creation of man, according as in the old proverb they termed man *a microcosm*. For when we consider with what nicety of contrivance man's body is compacted, and with what excellent gifts his soul is adorned, we must needs be as it were ravished with amazement. But the text requires another exposition: for David, purposing to follow up what he has hitherto said, cries out, that they do perversely and foolishly who will measure God's knowledge by their own limited capacity, as it marvellously transcends us. For seeing that when mention is made of God, many pass their opinions upon him after their own thoughts, there was good cause to rebuke this rashness. The generality allow not God to know more than they themselves are able to comprehend: but David confesses that God's knowledge is incomprehensible to him, as if he should say he is not able to express by any words the very thing he treats of; namely, that nothing is hid from God. For of his knowledge there is no measure nor end: and therefore he has nothing left him but to acknowledge his own weakness, and reverently to adore such amazing loftiness.

7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy face?

8 If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I lie in the grave, lo, thou *art there*.

9 Let me take the wings of the morning, that I may dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.

10 Even thither also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Yet shall the darkness hide me: even the night shall be light for me.

12 Yea, the darkness shall not overshadow from thee, and the night shall be as bright as the day, and the darkness shall be as the light.

7 *Whither shall I go, &c.*] In my judgment David prosecutes his former argument; that men avail nothing by the subterfuges with which they endeavour to escape the eyes of God. The word *spirit* is not put simply here for operation, power, or working, as it is commonly in the scriptures, but for mind and understanding. For, as in man, the spirit is the seat of understanding, he transfers this to God; which appears more plainly by the second part, where the word *face* is put for knowledge or sight. The effect is, that David cannot shift his place but God perceiveth it, or rather pursueth him with his eyes as he wings his way. This place, therefore, was improperly wrested to prove the infinity of God's being. For though it be undoubted that God's majesty filleth heaven and earth, yet David meant another thing; namely, that what corner soever he sought to hide his head in, he would be manifest to God, whose eyes pierce through both heaven and hell. Though, therefore, he should fly above the heavens, or lurk in the lowest deeps, he says that all things upward and downward are open to God's view. In the expression, *the wings of the morning*, or *Lucifer*, there is a beautiful allusion: for, as soon as the sun rises to the earth, he suddenly darts his brightness into all regions of the world, as though it were borne on swiftest pinion. The same metaphor also is to be met with in Malachi, iii. 2. The effect is, that although a man were as swift as the sunbeams, yet could he find no retreat from God, but should always be within his reach. For the word *hand* is put here for power; as if he had said, As often as men go about to withdraw themselves from God's sight, it will be at his pleasure presently to hale back the fugitives.

11 *If I say, &c.*] David puts on the character of a man keenly looking out for any by-way, if peradventure he may by any means escape out of his distress. Accordingly, after he has confessed that no fleeing can profit him, now, speaking of a new remedy, he says, Though no swiftness can avail to convey me out of God's sight, yet at least, when the light is quenched, darkness will come and hide me for a time, that I may take breath a while. But he says that even this also will be in vain, because God is no less keen-sighted in the thickest darkness than at noonday. They that sever these

two members, *The darkness shall cover me, and the night shall be light for me*, (as if he should say that his darkness should be turned into light, so that seeing nothing himself he should nevertheless be open to the sight of God,) are, in my judgment, in error: for rather, David, framing his words after his own understanding, means that if he might find any covert then would he have some liberty; even as to thieves and wild beasts the night is instead of day, because they range then more at liberty. If, therefore, I shall promise myself any respite, says he, in the darkness of the night, my anticipation will fail because the darkness dims not thy light. And by the word **Q**, we gather that the members ought to be so knit together. Now if any one shall think it superfluous to say that there is no difference before God between light and darkness, experience proves sufficiently that most reluctantly and with the utmost difficulty are men induced to come forth into the sight of God naked and unshrouded. Indeed all of us confess that God knoweth all things: but what no man calls in question every one makes light of secretly and by himself, while we recklessly mock him, and are not restrained by any awe of him, so as that at least he should have as much influence on us as a mortal man. For a sense of shame makes us unwilling that any man should be cognizant and a witness of our turpitude; but we feel no regard for the judgment of God, as though our misdeeds were hid from his eyes by the interposition of a curtain. Unless this gross dulness of ours be goaded with unsparing severity, it will progressively turn our light into thick darkness.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins : thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee, because I am terribly made wonderful : wonderful are thy works, and that doth my soul know right well.

15 My strength, which thou hast made, in secret is not hid from thee : I was woven together in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes saw my unfashionedness : all things shall be written in thy book ; they were fashioned in time, and not one of them.

13 *For thou hast possessed, &c.*] Although he seem to continue the same doctrine, yet he proceeds somewhat further, namely, that it is no marvel if he make such narrow

search into all the most secret thoughts of men, seeing he is the maker of their reins and their hearts. Therefore he says that even in men's reins God hath his judgment-seat from whence to execute his jurisdiction, and that it is no wonder though the intricate recesses of our hearts cannot beguile him, who beheld us when we were yet shut up in our mother's womb as manifestly as if we had been laid forth in the open light. Now we perceive upon what occasion David now descends to man's creation. To the same purpose pertains the next verse. In the words whereof, although there be some ambiguity, yet is the meaning evident and easy; namely, that David was formed by wonderful means, and such as might justly excite wonderment and fear, whereby he is compelled to break forth into the praises of God. For hence comes that reckless indulgence of the flesh, because we weigh not thoroughly how wonderfully the heavenly workmaster hath fashioned us. Afterwards David mounts from the particular to the general, crying out that all the works of God which present themselves to our view are so many miracles, which ought to ravish us with admiration of them. For, as I have said heretofore, the right consideration of God's works is that which ends in admiration. When he adds that *his soul doth right well know* God's wonders, which, notwithstanding, far exceed the reach of our faculties, it tends to no other end but that he will with modest and chastened diligence attend and give his mind that when he has gotten a taste of God's wonderful works, he may adore the immeasurable highness of his glory. What is described here, therefore, is not such a knowledge as may subject to our senses what David has, under the name of miracle, confessed to be incomprehensible, (even as the overweening of philosophers so puffs them up that they leave nothing for God secret from them,) but all that is denoted here is such a godly attentiveness as may awaken us to render glory to God.

15 *My strength, which, &c.*] David proceeds to reason from the creation of man, that nothing is hid from God. And he shews that God far excelleth all the most perfect workmasters, who have need of eyes to fashion their work, whereas God hath formed us even in our mother's bowels. And whether he mean our bones, or our strength, it imports little to the effect of the matter: though I had rather understand it of the bones. Afterwards he compares our mother's womb to the nethermost caves and recesses of the earth. If any craftsman should purpose to attempt a piece of work in some dark cavern without help of light, where shall he begin? What shall be his plan of proceeding? and of what



sort will be the performance of his work? But God, without the help of any light, fashioneth the most perfect of all works, that is, man, in his mother's womb. And the verb **קָרַם**, which signifies *to weave together*, makes much to enhance the matter. For it is not to be doubted but that David meant to express metaphorically the inconceivable contrivance which appears in the shape of man's body. For if we look only upon his nails, yet is there nothing that can be changed there, but the inconvenience of it will presently shew that something is misplaced. What shall we say then if every several part should be thoroughly examined? what embroiderer, with all his industry and genius, could attain to the hundredth part of the cunning displayed in this manifold and various texture? No marvel, then, though God so perfectly know men when born into the world, since he finished them in all points in their mother's womb.

16 *Thine eyes saw, &c.*] As the embryo, when it is conceived in the womb, does not immediately receive its shape, David says here that God knew him beforehand, even then, when he was but a shapeless mass, which the Greeks call *κνῆμα*. For the embryo with them is called *fœtus* from the time of conception to the time of birth. And David reasons from the more likely to the less, that if God knew him before he had grown into any certain and distinct shape, much less could he now escape his knowledge. He says afterwards that all things were written in God's book; that is, that God knew thoroughly the whole manner of his conception. For as touching the name of book, it is a similitude borrowed from men, who use books and registers for the help of their memory. Therefore, whatsoever things God knoweth, he is said to have entered in his journals, for his memory needeth no helps. In the second member the interpreters agree not. For some read **כִּי** in the nominative case, thus, *When the days were fashioned*; and they elicit this sense, All my bones were written in thy book, O God, from the beginning of the world, when thou madest days first, and yet there was none in very deed. But there is another interpretation more probable; namely, that every part of man's body is fashioned in process of time. For there appears not any orderly shape or proportion of members forthwith as soon as the seed grows together, but the mass is arranged and fashioned into its right shape in process of time. The interpreters disagree also in another thing. For, as in the particle **כִּי** it often happens that the letters **י** and **כ** are changed, some, as though **י** were written with **י**, that is, as though it were a

pronoun relative, expound it thus; Although my body were fashioned by little and little, yet was it always one and the same in the book of God, who hath no need of time to finish his work. But though nothing were changed, yet the negation does not suit ill; namely, that when his members were created in time, or by little and little, there was none of them, that is, because there was no proportionableness or distinction, but a shapeless globule. Thus it will be a commendation of God's providence, in that he disposeth that mass of corruption into a most beautiful shape in process of time.

17 And how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how mighty are the sums of them!

18 If I should number them, they will be more than the sand: I awaked, and still I am with thee.

17 *And how precious, &c.*] Here also the word חַשְׁבֹּנוֹת signifies rather *a thought* than a companion or friend, as many, following the Chaldean interpreter, translate it; as though the prophet came now to distinguish the faithful from the reprobates: for the context requires here that he should yet treat of God's incomparable providence. Therefore he repeats what he had said before, and not without good reason: for we see that the notable proofs of God's secret wisdom, which he exhibiteth in the creation of man, and the whole governing of his life, are either neglected, or not estimated at their due price. Some translate it *rare*, but it only obscures the sense: I grant the holy history uses the same word when it says that oracles were rare in the time of Eli the priest, 1 Sam. iii. 1. But seeing that he means *precious*, it is better to hold to that which is free from all ambiguity. And he terms them so, because they are not subject to man's judgment: in which sense he by and by adds, that the sums or collections of them are mighty or strong; that is, because they are able to overwhelm men's minds. And this exclamation teaches us that if they were not so dull, or rather senseless, they would be struck with amazement at the secret judgments of God, and not mock him so daringly as they do, but fearfully and humbly cite themselves to his judgment-seat. The same thing he confirms in the next verse, saying, that if any man go about to number God's secret determinations, the infinity of them exceeds the sand of the sea. Whence it follows, that our small capacity is not able to conceive the thousandth part of them. That which follows immediately after, namely, *I awaked, and still I am with thee*, though it is variously wrested by the inter-

preters, yet I hesitate not to take it simply that as often as David awakes out of sleep, there is new matter ministered and suggested for meditating upon this incredible wisdom of God. Therefore when he says he awakes, it must not be restrained to one day, but as he has confessed his faculties to be lost in the immeasurable greatness of God's wisdom, so now he adds, Every day when I wake there is presented to me new matter of wonder. Now we perceive David's genuine meaning; namely, that God so governeth mankind, that nothing at all can escape him, no, not even their deepest thoughts. And though many through brutish carelessness cast themselves headlong into all mischief, as if they should never come into God's sight, yet he tells them that they dig themselves caves in vain, because they shall be drawn into the light whether they will or no. And so much the more diligently does it behove us to weigh this doctrine, because while every man gazes upon his hands and feet, and is conceited of the beauty of his form, scarce one in a hundred remembers his Creator. But if any think themselves beholden to God for their life, yet no one climbs to this chief point of doctrine; that he who made both the eyes and ears, and created the heart endued with understanding, heareth, seeth, and understandeth all things.

19 O God, if thou wilt slay the wicked, then get ye from me, ye bloody men.

20 They that have spoken wickedly of thee, have taken up a lie, *being* thine adversaries.

21 Lord, shall not I hate them that hate thee? And shall not I strive with them that rise up against thee?

22 With perfect hatred do I hate them; I take them for mine utter enemies.

23 Try me, O God, and know my heart; examine me, and know my thoughts;

24 And consider if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me forth in the way of the world.

19 *O God, if thou, &c.*] Some think this verse is connected with the last, but it is a forced construction: nor do I like to take it in the manner of wishing, as some do, thus: O that thou wouldest slay the wicked, O God: nor do I a whit more incline to their opinion who think that David congratulates himself because the wicked are taken out of the world: for I think he means rather another thing;

namely, that he will apply his mind to consider God's judgments, that he may profit in the fear of him, and in godliness, as often as he punisheth the reprobate. And truly God setteth them forth for an example, that the punishments which are laid upon them may call back the elect from their company. For though David were of his own accord forward to the service and fear of God, yet had he need of some bridle, as the rest of the faithful have; according also as it is said in Is. xxvi. 9, that *when God executeth his judgments, then shall the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness*; that is, to keep themselves in the fear of God. Meanwhile I doubt not but the prophet calls upon God to witness his innocence; as if he should say, he comes freely and unfeignedly to God's judgment-seat, because he is not one of the wicked despisers of God, nor has any dealings with them.

20 *They that have, &c.*] He sets forth the unbridled wickedness into which the ungodly rush as long as God spareth them, and afflicteth them not with his avenging hand. For they not only believe they shall escape with impunity, whatsoever they do, but pour out open blasphemies against the judge himself. For he says they spoke wickedly, because they threw no specious colouring over their wickedness, (even as they who have any sense of shame left, keep in their tongues,) but openly professed contempt of God. The second member, where he says, *they took the name of God deceitfully*, some expound restrictedly, that they abused God's name for their perjuries. Nearer to the likelihood of truth do they come, who say that the wicked take God's name in vain, when they transform him into the creatures of their own imagination: for experience teaches that most men understand what God is, but make him like one that is half dead. Indeed he is called everywhere the judge of the world; but that confession comes to nought presently, because they deprive him of his office of judging. And that is to take the name of God deceitfully, because they darken his glory, and after a sort disfigure him. But as the name of God is not expressed, and the word נשָׂא signifies *to lift up on high*, in my opinion one may more conveniently expound it thus; that they lift themselves up with windy and deceitful pride. And this lifting up is almost always coupled with the frowardness he made mention of. For whence comes it that they dare pour out the poison of their insolence against God, but because, being intoxicated with pride, they consider not that on the one side they are but wretched dwarfs, and on the other, rob God of his power. And he calls them God's adversaries in this respect, because who-

soever advances himself above his due degree, makes war against God after the manner of the giants.

21 *Lord, shall not I hate, &c.*] He proceeds to shew how much he had profited in that continual thinking upon God, that is, that by calling himself back to God's judgment-seat, and considering that he could not escape the hands of him whose eyes pierce into the nethermost deeps, he had bound himself to the law of godly and holy conversation. For in saying that he hated the despisers of God, he by that protestation avouches his own integrity. Not that he himself was clear from all offence; but that he was devoted to the exercise of godliness, and detested all wickedness from his heart. For the love of godliness thrives not sufficiently in our hearts, unless it engender such a hatred of wickedness as David speaks of here. Again, if that zeal of God's house glow in us, whereof David makes mention in Psalm lxix. 10, inexcusable is our coldness, when we suffer not only his justice to be impeached, but also his sacred name to be insolently trodden under foot by the wicked, without uttering a word. As for the last verb, *קִוֵּי* signifies *to chide*, or *contend*; here in the conjugation Hithpael, it keeps the same signification; except perchance David denotes something more express; namely, that he was so exasperated that he whetted his soul to chide with them. We see, then, that David setting light by the hatred of the whole world, strove manfully for the maintenance of God's glory, inso-much that he undertook open war against all wicked men.

22 *With perfect hatred, &c.*] Word for word it is, *with the perfection of hatred*. He confirms the former sentence; namely, that he made so great account of God's glory, that he could not abide to have any acquaintance with the despisers of him. The whole comes to this, that he had no agreement with the works of darkness. For whosoever winks at wicked deeds, and encourages them by his silence, is a falsehearted betrayer of God's cause, who commiteth to all of us the defence of his righteousness. And by this example we are taught to despise the hatred of all wicked men, with bold and lofty minds, when we have to contend for the honour of God; and rather to renounce all the friendships upon earth, than, by compliances, basely to cultivate the favour of those who studiously provoke the hatred of God. And the more is this lesson to be noted, because the pursuit of our own welfare, estimation, and ease, so carry us away, that we hesitate not to undertake any contest whenever any man offends us; but in maintaining God's glory we are timorous and heartless. According, therefore, as every one of us is devoted to self, and consults his own interests, so

no other cause moves us to debates, quarrellings, frays, and battles, but to revenge our own injuries. But if the majesty of God be impeached, no man stirs himself. But if a zeal of God thrive in us, it will shew itself by this stoutheartedness, when we had rather be at deadly-feud with the wicked, and the despisers of God, than be alienated from God for their sakes. Still, it is to be noted that the hatred whereof the prophet makes mention, is not directed so much against the persons as their vices. For we must maintain peace with all men as far as may be; the welfare also of all men is to be dear to us; and, if it be possible, they must be called back into the way, in a spirit of gentleness and by all manner of kind offices. But in respect that they are God's enemies, we must set ourselves vigorously against their fury.

23 *Try me, O God, &c.*] He confirms it that he was an enemy to the despisers of God, for no other cause but that he himself revered God purely, and was desirous that others should fear him with the same mind. He must needs have been endued with rare confidence, who could offer himself so fearlessly to be tried by the judgment of God. But as he was well assured in himself of his unfeigned innocence, it is no mark of rashness for him to advance to God's judgment-seat with this boldness. And yet he meant not to profess himself clear from all fault, since he groaned sorrowfully under the burden of his sins. And it is certain that as often as the saints speak of their own innocence, they lean ever upon free forgiveness. But as they are persuaded that their godliness is accepted of God, howsoever they slip through infirmity, it is no marvel though they freely separate themselves from the wicked. And although he allege that he has not a feigned and double heart; yet does he not discharge himself from all guilt, but only denies that he is given over to wickedness. For the word צַלַּח, signifies not every offence, but sorrow and trouble, or a wickedness; and also sometimes it is metaphorically taken for an idol; which last signification agrees not with the present place. For David avouches himself to be safe, not only from superstition, but also from unrighteousness; according as in Isaiah, lix. 7, it is said that in the ways of such men there is trouble and desolation, because they deal violently, and shrink from no manner of iniquity. Others draw it to an evil conscience, which racks the wicked continually with secret torments: which is too forced. But howsoever the case stand, David affirms simply that although he were a man subject to sin, yet was he not wholly set upon wickedness.

24 *And lead me forth, &c.*] Some take it to be an imprecation, as though David should wish that mischief might



light upon himself; but it has no likelihood in it: I grant that *the way of the whole earth* is sometimes taken for *death*, which is common to all. But the word *lead* denotes rather a benefit than a punishment. Again, I cannot tell whether death is anywhere termed *the way of the world* or no. I doubt not, therefore, but hereby is denoted the continual course of human life; as if David should desire God to guide him in his race even unto the goal: neither am I ignorant what others think; for they extend it to the eternity of life. Neither do I deny but that under this fulfilment of the journey is also comprehended the life to come. But it suffices me to keep the simple sense of the words; namely, that as God had once stretched out his hand to his servant, he would govern him still to the end, and not forsake him in the midway.

## PSALM CXL.

*David complains as well of the implacable cruelty of his enemies, as of their plots and venomous slanders. Afterwards, calling upon God for protection, and believing that he will be favourable to him, he comforts himself with hope of deliverance, and of just vengeance upon his enemies.*

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

2 Lord, rescue me from the evil man : preserve me from the man of wrongs ;

3 Which imagine naughtiness in their heart, and gather together daily unto battle.

4 They have sharpened their tongue as a serpent ; the poison of adders is under their lips. Selah.

5 Lord, preserve me from the hands of the ungodly ; preserve me from the man of wrongs, which practise to trip up my heels.

6 The proud have laid a snare for me, and spread abroad their net with cords : they have set traps for me at the way of my path. Selah.

1 *To the chief chanter, &c.*] That I should restrain this Psalm to Doeg, as a great many of the interpreters do, I cannot be persuaded, because it will appear by the context that the subject is Saul and his counsellors, who ceased not to inflame the king more (though of himself too furious) to the destruction of the holy man. Now seeing that he

bore the person of Christ, it is no marvel that the satellites of the devil raged against him so cruelly. And this is the cause why he inveighs so severely against their fury and traitorousness. Further, by calling them evil and violent persons, he denotes that they run wilfully and greedily to do mischief, without any wrong offered to them. Therefore he commends his cause to God, saying he has maintained peace with them, and in no case harmed them, but they have wrongfully persecuted him who had deserved no such treatment. The same course also must we hold, that God may succour us against violence and evil-dealings. For David does not pour out railing words, as men are wont to do in quarrels, but he procures himself God's favour by this testimony of his innocence, because it is not possible but he must always succour good and peaceable men.

3 *Which imagine, &c.*] Here he arraigns their inward wickedness. And we see that it is not one man only that is noted; for now he passes to the plural number, (wherewith we ought by this time to be well acquainted) that a transition may be made from the head to all the partakers and associates in iniquity. Although we may take all that he has said hitherto in the singular number, indefinitely, as the grammarians term it. By the way he confirms that which I touched upon just now; namely, that their deadly attacks on him, were not for any desert of his. Therefore, the more wickedly our enemies shall vex us, or the more knavishly they shall assail us with their clandestine practices, we may assure ourselves that a present remedy is promised us of the Holy Ghost, who dictated this form of prayer by the mouth of David. The second member is translated three ways. Word for word it is, *which gather battles together*, and so some understand it. But as we know that the Hebrews often omit prepositions, I doubt not but his meaning is that they, by their false reports, kindle all men's hatreds, and thus become the trumpets of battle. For whereas divers take the word *וַיִּקְרְבוּ* for *to close together*, or *to rush together*, it seems irrelevant and insipid. Afterwards he expresses in what sort they stir up wrongful war; namely, by perverse slanders, because they could not oppress the good and guiltless man by violence and force of hand, until they had overwhelmed him with slanders.

5 *Lord, preserve me, &c.*] To his complaints and accusations, now again he adds prayer. Whereby appears the better what I have already touched upon; namely, that he does but call upon God for defence. And it is a repetition of the same sentence, certain words being altered. For whereas he had said, *rescue me*, now he says, *preserve me*,

and instead of *evil man*, he puts, *the hands of the wicked or ungodly*. And whereas he had said, *to imagine naughtiness*, he turns it into *practising* how they may trip up the miserable man's heels unawares. Also, what he had said of craftiness, he repeats metaphorically, not without earnestness. For he says that snares are laid round about him, to entrap him, unless the Lord succour him. Now though metaphors seem to be somewhat darker, at first sight, than simple and naked speech, yet does not this figure obscure that which has been spoken heretofore, and yet it carries greater force with it. Furthermore, from the word *ד'נל*, which signifies *stately* and *proud persons*, I gather that he treats not of the humble sort of men, but of such as, by reason of their authority, hoped to overthrow the poor man without any trouble. Therefore, as often as our enemies vaunt themselves insolently against us, let us learn by his example to flee to God, to whom it belongeth to repress the fierceness of the wicked. And yet he means not that they made their attacks only with violence and boldness, for he complains of their nets and traps. But he joins both of them together; namely, that upon trust of their authority, they devised wiles to destroy him withal.

7 I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God : hearken, O Lord, unto the voice of my suit.

8 O Lord, my Lord, the strength of my welfare ; thou hast put a covering upon my head in the day of battle.

9 O Lord, grant not the desires of the ungodly ; they have thought, *but* accomplish thou it not, *for* they will be exalted. Selah.

10 The head of them that besiege me, let the troublesomeness of his own lips cover him.

11 Let coals with fire fall upon them : he shall throw them headlong into the deeps, *and* they shall not rise again.

7 *I said unto the Lord, &c.*] He teaches, by these words, that his prayers have not their origin in his lips, like the prayers of the hypocrites, who for a vain show call aloud upon God ; but that he prays with an earnest and secret feeling of faith. For until such time as a man believe verily that he shall be saved by God's grace, there will be no unfeigned calling upon him. And beautifully is the nature of faith ex-

pressed here, when the prophet, withdrawing himself from the eyes of men, talks to God by himself alone. For this inward retiring into a man's own heart, shuts out all hypocrisy. Therefore, the true rule of praying is this, not to lift up the voice babblingly, but to utter our prayers through faith, conceived within. Moreover, that David may thoroughly persuade himself that his craving of help at God's hand is not in vain, he sets before him the helps that God had sent him before. And therefore he says he was as good as a shield to him as often as he was in jeopardy. Some translate it in the time to come, *thou shalt cover my head in the day of battle*: but I have no doubt that David declares he had been shielded by God's hand long ago, and that he gathers confirmation of his faith from that experience. For he comes forth not as a novice or raw tyro, but as a soldier well tried in sundry encounters. *Strength of welfare* imports as much as safeguard given by no ordinary force.

9 *O Lord, grant not, &c.*] It might also no less conveniently be translated *accomplish not*; but the sense will remain the same, namely, that God, by bridling the lust of the wicked, should disappoint whatsoever they attempt or go about. Whence we gather, that it is in his power to disappoint men's unholy devices and wicked anticipations, yea, and also to quell their zeal, as often as he thinketh it good. Therefore, when we see our enemies past calling back to a sound mind, we must pray God that he will in one moment scatter and overthrow the practices which they have been long weaving. In the second member there is greater ambiguity: for as the word פִּדּוֹ signifies sometimes *to stumble*, or *to fall*, and sometimes *to lead out*, it is not improper to translate it thus; Let not God bring to pass the things which the wicked agree upon. But the opinion of those also is probable, who read it in short strains, He thinketh with himself, Thou shalt not stumble; so that David should mimic the hopes that the wicked coin for themselves. In a nearly similar manner has he heretofore described their pride; namely, that having taken their leave of God's providence, they put the issues of all matters under their feet, as though they ruled the whole world with their beck alone: and thus will the words *they will be exalted*, agree very well; as if he should say, The wicked, being puffed up with pride, are lifted above the clouds, because they imagine that nothing adverse can happen to them. If any one prefer the other construction, then must it be read in thiswise: O God, suffer not that to take effect which the wicked consult upon, lest they be exalted. This indeed, is certain, that David lashes the carelessness of his enemies, for that, making no account of God,

they give themselves a loose rein to attempt what they list.

10 *The head of them that besiege me, &c.*] It is doubtful whether under the term *head*, he denote the chief of the adverse faction. For it may be as well a change of the person as an alteration of the number, in this sense; Let the mischief which they menace me with in their wicked communications, recoil upon their own head. But as nearly all interpreters agree in the former opinion, we will follow that which is most received, save that I think Saul noted, rather than Doeg. Afterwards, there follows a general imprecation upon the whole band of them; that coals of fire might fall upon them, where he seems to allude to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And we have seen this example of vengeance expounded by the Holy Ghost in other places to put all the reprobates in fear; according as, by the record of St. Jude, God hath by this everlasting example avouched once for all, that he will be the judge of all the wicked. That which follows is by some translated thus; *Thou shalt cast them into the fire*; which is tolerable. But as the letter  $\Delta$  oftentimes denotes *an instrument*, it may also conveniently be translated, *Cast them down by fire, or with fire*, like as God did cast his lightnings upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Also he wishes them to be drowned in bottomless deeps, from whence they may never rise up again. For whereas God is wont sometimes to heal such as he hath stricken sorely, David cuts off the reprobates from hope of forgiveness, verily because he saw they were incurable. For had they been susceptible of repentance, he himself would also have been in turn forward to mercy.

12 A man of tongue shall not be established upon earth: mischief shall hunt after the cruel man to drive him out.

13 I know that the Lord will execute the judgment of the poor, and the judgment of the afflicted.

14 Doubtless the righteous shall praise thy name; the righteous shall dwell before thy face.

12 *A man of tongue, &c.*] Some translate it, *a talkative person*; but it is too narrow. For he means neither a railer nor a prater, nor a vain talker and a braggart, but a venomous man; that fights rather with craft and slanders, than openly. For under another form, he shews that his enemies were given as well to treacheries and craftiness, as to open force and violence, and so were like both to lions and foxes, even as he

had complained before, that the poison of the adder or viper is under their lips. But as the verbs are of the future tense, the majority of interpreters turn it into the optative form; which although I reject not, yet I prefer to keep the future tense, because David seems not so much to pray, as to cheer up his heart to hope for deliverance. Therefore, whether his enemies creep upon him with craft, or betray their fury openly, he assures himself that he shall have help at God's hand. And the metaphor of hunting is very appropriate: for as the hunter when he sets his toils round about a beast, leaves no place for him to escape at, even so declares he that howmuchsoever the ungodly shuffle, yet can they not slip from the judgment of God. And mischief hunts after them to drive them out, because in seeking to escape with impunity, they do but precipitate their destruction.

13 *I know that the Lord, &c.*] Here now, without doubt, David, to seal up his prayer, soliloquizes on God's providence and judgment. For, as hath been said already, to pray doubtingly, is but labour lost. Therefore, he pronounces, as of a thing that he is sure of and has ascertained, that it cannot be but God must at length succour such as are afflicted. But as he winketh for a time, and suffereth good and simple men to be piteously vexed, David wisely sets a shield against this temptation; namely, that God does it purposely, to succour the afflicted and to rescue the oppressed. And therefore he says in express words, that God will be the defender of the poor and afflicted; and by this means he heartens himself and others to bear adversities patiently, until the convenient time of bringing help may come; as if he should say, All men take me now for a wretch, because I am abandoned to the lust of the wicked and am not rescued forthwith by the hand of God; yet shall not despair overwhelm me, because I know it to be the peculiar office of God, to undertake the cause of the poor: for when some restrain it to the person of David exclusively, it gives a poor sense. Hence he gathers that the righteous will yield thanks to God, and that they shall always be safe under his protection. For the particle *¶*, which often is adversative, here simply affirms. Nevertheless, it is here used inferentially: though, therefore, the godly must be dumb for awhile, and cease from praising God by constraint of anguish, yet David avouches that what was taken from them, shall soon after be restored them, so that they may celebrate God's grace with mirth and gladness. And because this was a matter hard to be believed when things were altogether confused, he put in the particle *doubtless*. For thus it behoves us, by wrestling, to force our way to this



confidence, that however great the misery in which the faithful lie may be, yet shall they in a short time recover their cheerfulness, and sing praises to God's name. The second member is a rendering of the cause; for he says that the matter for which the righteous shall praise God shall be this, because they perceive that God hath a care of their welfare. For *to dwell before the face of God*, is to be cherished and maintained by his fatherly providence.

## PSALM CXLI.

*Whatever was the necessity that compelled David to this manner of praying, however unworthily and guiltlessly he was burdened with grievous wrongs, yet desires he God to bridle and rule his mind, lest, abandoning himself to the desire of vengeance, he requite like for like, and so strive in evil-doing. Afterwards, when he has composed himself to patient endurance, he calls upon God to avenge him of his enemies.*

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Lord, I have called unto thee, hie thou unto me; hearken unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be conveyed up as incense before thy face; and the lifting up of mine hands as an evening sacrifice.

3 Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and ward thou at the door of my lips.

4 Incline not my heart unto evil things, to commit works in wickedness with the men that work iniquity: let me not eat of their delicacies.

1 *Lord, I have called, &c.*] From this beginning we may gather, that when David prayed thus, he was sore pressed with no light temptation: for he both reiterates the same request, and is also vehement and importunate in urging his request for help. And though I dare not fix upon any time, yet I dislike not the conjecture of those that will have this Psalm to be made upon the persecutions which he suffered under Saul. Now David, by his own example, invites us to seek directly to God, lest by busying ourselves in hunting after sundry helps, as worldlings are wont to do, we should relax in zeal to pray. He says he cries to God, whereas worldlings sooner call upon heaven, earth, men, fortune, and all the creatures of their imagination. And if at any time they direct their voices to God, yet do they

clamour and murmur, so that it is rather howling than praying. In the second verse no doubt he alludes to the ceremonies of the law. For as it was God's will that the prayers of the faithful should in those days be hallowed with incense and sacrifices, David leans upon that promise. Now, whereas some conjecture hence that he was then a fugitive and banished man from the congregation of the godly, I know not whether it is well supported. According to their opinion there is a tacit antithesis, thus: Although prohibited from coming to the sanctuary to shew myself there among the worshippers of God, and although excluded from the incense and solemn sacrifices, yet reject not my prayers, O God. But as no reason compels to take it so narrowly, let us be content with this general doctrine, that as by these symbols the faithful were admonished that their prayers were no less acceptable to God than an incense of the sweetest savour, and the choicest sacrifices, David fetches a confirmation of his faith from hence. For though the fathers were in nowise tied to those ceremonies, yet ought David to apply these helps to his own use. Therefore, as he reflects that the offering of incense daily upon the altar by the command of God is not without an object, nor the offering of the evening sacrifice in vain, he couples his prayers with that law service. The *lifting up of the hands* is doubtless taken for praying itself. For they that in this place translate מנחה *a gift*, obscure, or rather mar, the prophet's native meaning. For how insipidly would he say, Let my present, or let mine evening gift please thee! Now as this word, being derived from נשׂא, signifies *a heaving*, or *lifting up*, it agrees very well, that his praying should be betokened by the outward gesture. And it is easy to be seen that David, according to his wont, repeats one thing twice. Now to what end it has been evermore received by common consent of all nations to lift up one's hands in praying, has been shewn heretofore.

3 *Set a watch, O Lord, &c.*] Because David might have been so shaken with the unbridled cruelty and lust of his enemies, as that he might have had less stay of himself than was meet, he desires to be governed by God. And he requests not only to have his hands restrained from revenge, but also his tongue, as well from evil-speaking, as also from angry words. For it happens sometimes that even the most moderate men, if armed without desert, are so disquieted with the unkind dealing of their enemies, that they start out to revenge themselves. David, therefore, desires the Lord to bridle his tongue, that no untoward word may escape him: and also to restrain his heart from all froward imagi-

nations, that he may not requite wrongs with wrongs. Whereas it follows afterwards, *Let me not eat of their delicacies*: it is a metaphorical expression; as if he should say, Let not their prosperity entice me to wicked emulation of them. For these three things must be read jointly. But it will be better to examine them one by one more closely. As nothing is more difficult than for those that are wrongfully troubled to have such hold of their tongue as that they may quietly, and with silence, gulp down their wrongs, it is not for nought that David desires to have his mouth guarded with watch and ward, yea, and to have the door of his mouth kept fast shut by God, as if a porter should watch the comings in and goings out at a gate. For the word **לִשְׁמֹרֶת** is rather a verb in the imperative mood than a noun. Secondly, he adds that God *should not incline his heart to evil things*; for the word **לֵב**, as in many other places, is put here for *a business*. And immediately after he declares his own meaning; namely, that he might not become like his enemies by striving with them in doing evil. If the monk, of whom mention is made in Eusebius, had weighed well this meaning of David's, he would not have been so silly as to have thought that he had performed the part of a very good scholar in holding his peace for seven years together. For when he heard that it was a mark of rare virtue to bridle the tongue, he got himself into a wilderness afar off, and returned not to his master till seven years after. And then, being asked the cause of his long tarriance, he answered that he had been practising what he had learned out of this verse. But it should also have been asked of him, whether he had *thought* upon nothing else all that time. For these two things, namely, to be silent, and to be free from evil thoughts, are connected together. But it might happen that in holding his peace he conceived many a wicked thought in himself, which is worse than to rail foolishly. I thought good to touch briefly upon this stupid dotage, that the readers might learn what it is to leave the meaning of a writer, and to catch hold of some one dismembered word. Moreover, David, in committing as well his words as his thoughts to the governance of God, confesses that neither the tongue nor the mind can be kept in order otherwise than by the secret governance of the Holy Ghost, especially when the frowardness of our enemies urges us to impatience. Now if the tongue be too slippery and voluble except God keep it as a porter or a watchman, no less need is there that the turbulent affections should be restrained within. For what a laboratory is man's heart, and what a variety of devices forges he almost every mo-

ment! We must needs, therefore, confess with David, that if God guard not our hearts and tongues there will be no limit to unholy thoughts or words. For the government of the tongue is the singular gift of the Holy Ghost; and also Satan will never cease prompting us with store of things which we shall easily or rather greedily embrace, except God set himself against them. Neither must it seem against reason that God inclines our hearts to evil things, seeing that our hearts are in his hand, to be bowed hither and thither at his discretion. Not that he himself moveth us to evil lusts, but as he by his secret judgment giveth over the reprobates to the tyranny of Satan, yea, and maketh them very bondslaves to him, he is justly said to blind them and harden them. And yet in the mean time the blame of men's wickedness is not to be sought for but in the men themselves, in whom concupiscence dwells; and as they naturally covet good or evil, they incline to evil, not by outward impulse, but willingly, and through their own default. Where I have translated it, *to commit works in wickedness*, others translate it, and not amiss, *to think thoughts*. But as they amount to the same meaning, I do not trouble much about it. By the noun כִּנְעָמִים, which I have translated *delicates*, he means the mirth wherein the ungodly delight themselves, so long as God, of his long sufferance, winketh at their offences. And as they grow the more daringly presumptuous, so is it to be feared, lest the faithful, being beguiled with their prosperity, should also fall away with them. And, therefore, not without cause does David desire to be reined in with the secret bridle of the Holy Ghost, that he feed not of their delicacies; that is, that inebriated with the fascinations of pleasure, he take not license to offend, and thus luxuriate in sin.

5 Let the righteous strike me, *and it shall be* mercy: let him chastise me, *and it shall be* precious oil, that shall not break my head: for yet still, and my prayer *shall be* in their miseries.

6 Their judges are thrown down into stony places, and shall hear my words for they be sweet.

7 Our bones lie scattered at the grave's mouth, as he that breaketh and cutteth on the earth.

5 *Let the righteous, &c.*] Because while Satan allures the wicked with his baits, they themselves also beguile each other and are beguiled by mutual flatteries, David affirms here, that he had much rather be continually quickened with

chastisements as it were with rods, than be deceived with hollow blandishments. For as among the despisers of God, he is not blamed which is infected with this fault or that, whosoever minds to be sound, must diligently associate himself with upright men, that may be able to set him up again with holy counsel if he fall, or call him back to the way again if he go astray. Indeed, to be blamed as often as we do amiss, is by no means pleasant to the flesh; but David had so framed his mind to teachableness and forbearing, that no rebuking of him, which he knew to proceed from the spirit of meekness, could be bitter to him. However, as there is some ambiguity in the words, it must be seen what sense will suit best. The word **יָדָן** might fitly be resolved into the adverb *mercifully* or *charitably*, or there might be supplied the preposition *in* or *with*: and in this opinion the greater part of interpreters agree; namely, that the corrections which breathed humanity and mercy, or which proceeded from a gentle and benevolent mind, should be to David as good as most precious oil. If this translation be liked, then is it to be considered, that David looks not so much to the outward manner of the chiding, as to the meekness of the heart. For though the righteous break out into violent heat in words, and reprove offenders very sharply, yet are they not moved by any other affection than brotherly love. Nay rather, even their very rigour proceeds from a godly carefulness, for fear lest their brothers should miscarry. The righteous, therefore, will always behave himself charitably, although he seem somewhat severe and vehement: likewise the malicious, though they do but reprove men lightly, yet are uncharitable. Finally, by this mark David meant to discern the rebukings that proceed from pure love, from the railings that burst out of hatred or enmity, according as Solomon says, Prov. x. 12. Notwithstanding, as fitly also agrees the other interpretation which I have set down; namely, Let the righteous rebuke me, and it shall be mercy, or I will accept it as a benefit. Let him chastise me, and it shall be to me a precious ointment that shall not hurt my head. This latter member is otherwise expounded by some, in thiswise; Let not the ointment of the head break my head; that is to say, Let not the wicked cloy me with their smooth flatteries to my destruction. And thus, under the name of *oil* or *ointment* they will have to be betokened the pestilent flatteries wherewith the wicked send us headlong into destruction, when under pretence of sweetness they plunge us more and more into the bottomless pit. In thiswise would the sentence be the fuller; that David is not only obedient and willing to receive correction, but also that he shuns flattery no less than the

baneful songs of sirens. And truly, though at the first taste it be sweet to be praised, yet whosoever shall give ear to flattering and soothing, shall soon after suck in most present poison with his whole heart. But we must learn by this example of David's, to shake off all flatteries to which we are overforward by nature, and also to lay aside all wilfulness, that we refuse not chastisements, which are most wholesome remedies of our vices. For many are so fond of perishing in their sluggishness, that even he that is forced to condemn himself, notwithstanding covets to be acquitted by the suffrages of the world. *For yet still, &c.* This member is expounded three ways. Some elicit this meaning; that as nothing is more easy than to be corrupted by wicked examples, David makes petition that he may not step aside into their naughtiness. The second interpretation is, that because David sees that they seek to achieve by unhallowed means whatsoever they list, he desires of the Lord to be kept safe from their malice. The third render it thus; Because I see they are past hope, I wish them to suffer what they have deserved, that God's just vengeance may at length shew itself against them. The contrary sense, however, might seem fitter; namely, that their wilfulness does not hinder David wishing well to them. For the words *yet still* are put in with a vehemency. What if David should prophesy of their unhappy end? as if he should say, Though the ungodly now wanton, yet when he shall have rested awhile, it will shortly fall out that he himself shall be fain to pity them. And surely the structure of the words leads us rather thereto; for he says not, *my prayer shall yet still be in their miseries*, but he seems to say *for yet still* apart by itself, and then afterwards putting in the copula *and* he adds, *and my prayer shall be in their miseries*. As, therefore, it was to be feared lest David should have fallen away to vanity with them, he wisely suspends his mind, as if he should say, Let us tarry yet a little while, and at length they shall be stricken with a horrible overthrow, which shall force even me and all others of God's children to pity them.

6 *Their judges, &c.*] Almost all interpreters agree in altering the mood of the verb. For they take the preter tense instead of the future, and then resolve it into the mood of wishing, in thiswise; Let their judges be thrown down, &c. In my opinion, David's meaning would be clear, if we translate it in thiswise; When their judges are thrown down from rocks or upon stony places, then shall they hear my sayings. Certain it is, that as David saw that the raging of the common people against him was merely because they were misled by false reports, he lays all the



blame upon their leaders. And therefore when they shall be deprived of their authority, his hope is that the simple will come to their right minds again. And the throwing of them down from the rocks, or into stony places, is put here metaphorically, in respect of the dignity wherein they were placed. Now though they were not altogether without fault, who followed wicked leaders in persecuting a godly and holy man wrongfully, yet does he justly hope better things in regard to their amendment; because they will then begin to be wise, when God shall have executed his vengeance upon the leaders themselves. For we see that the people allow this or that, rather upon sudden impulse, than deliberate choice, and are carried by blind prejudices to the most pernicious acts; and that when they are warned of it, they retrace their steps with the same facility. Therefore, though credulity is always a vice, and folly no just excuse, yet are we admonished by David's example, that we should wish wholesome counsel to such as are out of the way, that they may patiently give ear to truth and right.

7 *Our bones lie scattered, &c.*] Here David complains that his enemies were not content to kill him out of hand, and make no more ado, but he says that he and his companions were torn in pieces before they were cast into their graves. And whereas robbers when they have murdered a man, cast his body whole into the grave; David avouches that he and his company have been more cruelly handled; namely, that their bones were scattered abroad, as wood and stones are hewn in pieces, or as earth is dugged up. Hence it follows that David was wonderfully rescued from many deaths, according as Paul speaks of himself, 2 Cor. i. 9. Whence also we must conceive hope of life and salvation, though our bones be broken and scattered abroad.

8 For mine eyes *look* unto thee, O Lord, my Lord, in thee have I trusted, leave not my soul destitute.

9 Keep me from the hands of the snare which they have laid for me, and from the nets of them that work iniquity.

10 Let the wicked fall into his nets together, I will ever pass over them.

8 *For mine eyes, &c.*] If we bear in mind what is implied in the scattering of bones that he lately mentioned, this prayer must be so taken, as though fragments of the dismembered and

torn body cried to God. Whence we gather with what heroic courage David was endued, who, being overwhelmed with so huge a burden, ceased not, however, to keep his eyes cast still upon God, even as it is the proper office of faith to gather together the scattered thoughts, which otherwise would from time to time vanish away. Therefore, though it was a notable miracle of God, to keep men alive when their bones were scattered; it was a double miracle to hold their minds settled in steadfastness, that they quailed not.

9 *Keep me, &c.*] He confesses that he is held fast in the traps of his enemies, if he be not delivered by the power of God. Nevertheless, by his calling upon God in this distress, he shews what great account he makes of his grace; even as in Ps. lxviii. 21, he said that the issues of death were in his hand, because he often delayeth deliverance, that it may be the more manifest in the end, and also turneth the practices of the ungodly upon their own heads. And whereas some refer the pronoun *his*, in the tenth verse, to Saul, as if he should say, Let Doeg, and such as he, fall into the snares of Saul, it seems to be against reason, and therefore, I suppose that God is covertly betokened without expressing his name. He had said before, *Lord, keep me from the snares and nets of the ungodly*; and now, against the nets that the wicked had set to compass the simple, he sets God's nets, who is wont to catch the wily in the mischief which they devise for others. And because he had to deal with a great multitude, he says, *Let them fall together*. For unless he had been assured that God is able, without trouble, to overthrow whatsoever power men heap together, there had been no hope for him to escape. That which follows admits a twofold interpretation. Many translate it, *I shall always pass over*. But the order may be transposed thus, *while I pass over*. His wish, therefore, is, that his enemies should be snared, while he himself escaped safe.

## PSALM CXLII.

*When Saul came into the cave where David lay hid, the holy man might, at a crisis so perilous, either have been amazed, or else been moved by fear to do what was not lawful; even as they do that despair of their life, either lie like men in a trance, or are hurried from one thing to another in distraction. But David testifies in this Psalm, that he kept his mind composed, so that, reclining upon God in assured faith, he attempted not any unlawful thing, but contented himself with vows and prayers.*

[*David's Instruction. A Prayer when he was in the cave.*]

2 With my voice have I cried unto the Lord:  
with my voice have I prayed unto the Lord.

3 I pour out my mind before his face, I declare  
mine affection before his face.

4 When my spirit tumbled itself upon me, and  
thou didst know my path: in the way that I walked  
they laid a snare for me.

5 I cast mine eye to my right hand, and looked,  
and there was none that knew me: flee I could not,  
and there was no man that sought after my soul.

2 *With my voice, &c.*] Wonderful was the presence of mind of David, that neither confounded with fear, nor infuriated with anger, he took revenge of his enemy, which had been easy for him to do, nor was impelled by despair to slay him; but directed his prayers to God with a settled mind. Not without cause, therefore, is the title added to denote the circumstance; neither does David himself without cause avouch that he was wholly devoted to God. When he was besieged round about by the army of Saul, how came it to pass that beholding himself as it were imprisoned in the grave, he notwithstanding withheld his hand from his implacable enemy, but because he armed himself with prayer to overcome all temptations? To this refers the repetition, whereby he gives us to understand, that he prayed without ceasing, that he might stand immoveable against all waves. Also he expresses more clearly in the next verse, that he had disburdened his cares into God's bosom. For he sets his pouring out his mind and declaring his trouble against the perplexing anxieties which miserable men digest inwardly, and wherewith they burn up themselves,

while they had rather chafe upon the bit, than flee to God; or against the frantic shrieks which others cast into the air, because they conceive no comfort from God's fatherly providence. The effect, therefore is, that he neither howled out with brutish violence before men, nor wrung his mind with secret torments, but uttered his griefs familiarly before God.

4 *When my spirit, &c.*] Although he confess here that he was sorrowful in his heart, yet does he confirm that which he has said of the constancy of his faith. And it is a goodly metaphor exhibiting the mind entangled and involved in itself. For when there appears no way to get out of dangers, the mind fluctuates amidst a variety of reflections, and by seeking for counsel on all hands, swells the amount of its distress. Therefore his meaning is, that though there was no means of deliverance to be seen, yet did God always know how to deliver him. Some take this member, *thou hast known my path*, otherwise; as though David should make God a witness of his innocence. But the other which I have alleged is more correct; that whereas he turned his mind up and down with various agitations, and yet could not wind himself out of them, God, however, always knew the means to deliver him. By which words we are taught, that though after attempting all remedies, it happen that we are as far to seek as we were at the beginning, yet ought this to suffice us, that God is not unacquainted with our miseries, and vouchsafeth to undertake the care of us; according as Abraham said, Gen. xxii. 2, *The Lord will provide*. This same rule followed David, when being beset with the darkness of death, he shut his eyes, and resigned himself to be ruled by God's fatherly providence.

5 *I cast mine eye, &c.*] He maintains that he suffered not those sore torments without cause, since there was neither any human help or comfort to be hoped for, nor any way of escape from death. Furthermore, when he says that in casting his eye aside, and looking about, he found not any friend among men, he means not that, passing over God, he turned his mind about to worldly helps, but that as far as he lawfully might, he had sought whether there were any helper upon earth. If any had been offered, doubtless he would have taken him to have been a minister of God's grace. But it was God's will to bereave him of man's help, in order to rescue him from death the more wonderfully. *To seek after one's soul*, is put here in good part, for to be careful for the saving of man's life.

6 I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my hope, and my portion in the land of the living.

7 Hearken unto my cry, for I am greatly distressed with misery: deliver me from my persecutors, for they are grown overstrong for me.

8 Pluck my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous men shall crown me because thou hast rewarded me.

6 *I cried unto thee, &c.*] Now, that God may make the more haste to help, David complains that he is enfeebled and brought even to the last cast; and, as I have said heretofore, by the word *cry*, he indicates his earnestness. At length, he says, he has need to be ransomed, because he is held as a prisoner. For when, by the word *prison*, some understand the *cave*, it is too restrained. That which is added in the end, namely, *the righteous shall crown me*, is translated otherwise; namely, *the righteous shall wait for me*. But I have kept to the true and natural signification of the word. Nevertheless, I confess that it is put for standing round about him in a ring; as if he had said, He shall be a spectacle to all men, because all men will cast their eyes from all quarters upon so manifest a deliverance. If any one prefer to read it without a figure, the meaning will be this: The righteous shall not only rejoice with me, but also set a crown upon my head in token of victory. There are also that interpret it thus: They shall flock about me to rejoice with me, and stand round about me in a ring. But as word for word it is, *They shall crown me*, some supply another pronoun; namely, That the righteous shall transfer to their own glory the benefit that was bestowed upon David, because, whenever God delivereth any one of his servants, he crowneth all the rest of them by inviting them to the same hope. Nevertheless, that which I have set down is the simpler, namely, that this grace shall be apparent to all men as upon a stage, that it may be a notable assurance to pillar up their faith. For the word *למל* has a more extensive signification than *to reward*, and imports as much as *to bestow a benefit*; as we have said in other places.

## PSALM CXLIII.

*Although David had to do with flagitious enemies, who oppressed him no less wrongfully than cruelly; yet, as he acknowledges it to happen by the just judgment of God, that he may win the favour of God, he resorts humbly to suing for pardon. Afterwards, when he has complained of his enemy's cruelty, and avouched that no heaviness could ever make him forget God, he requires as well to be set up again, as also to be governed by God's Spirit, that he may devote the residue of his life to godliness.*

*[A Psalm of David.]*

1 Lord, hear my prayer; hearken to my supplication; answer me in thy truth, and in thy righteousness.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall none living be justified.

3 For the enemy hath pursued my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath laid me in the dark as the dead of the world.

1 *Lord, hear my prayer, &c.*] Seeing that David bewails his miseries so sorrowfully and bitterly, it appears that the cruelty of his enemies was extreme. And this preface shews that he was touched with no light grief. The reason why he joins righteousness and truth together, has been explained elsewhere. For we must not, under the word *righteousness*, imagine desert and reward, as some unskilfully do; but by God's righteousness is meant his goodness, whereby he is led to defend those that are his. To the same refers the word *truth*, because the best trial of his faithfulness is, never to forsake those whom he hath promised to help. God, therefore, by helping his servants, sheweth himself to be as well righteous as true; first, because he disappointeth not their hope; and secondly, because, by benefiting them, he exhibiteth a specimen of his own nature. And therefore David justly sets them both before him to embolden himself to praying.

2 *And enter not, &c.*] Why he comes down to craving of pardon, I told you just now. For whencesoever adversity comes, we must take it to be the scourge of God wherewith he provoketh us to repentance. For since he hath no delight at all in our miseries, it is certain that our sins are



the cause of his handling us roughly. Therefore, although David have to deal with wicked men, in respect of whom he was well assured of his own innocence, yet does he humbly and unfeignedly acknowledge his fault before God. And we must hold this for a general rule, that if we desire to have God merciful to us, we must beseech him to pardon our sins. For seeing that David's only refuge was to implore forgiveness, which of us shall dare to come forth into God's presence upon trust of his own righteousness and innocence? Nevertheless, David not only instructs the faithful by his own example after what sort they ought to pray, but also avouches that no man shall be found righteous if he be summoned to plead his cause. And this place contains a most pregnant doctrine. For, as I observed just now, we are taught that God will not grant us favour when we come to him, unless he lay aside the character of a judge, and reconcile us to himself by remitting our sins freely. Whence it follows, that all men's righteousnesses fall to the ground, as soon as they come once to his judgment-seat. And though all men in one word confess the same, yet scarce one in a hundred acknowledges it in earnest. For while one bears with another, all recklessly brave God's judgment, as if it were as easy for them to make satisfaction, as to be absolved by the voices of men. But, that we may understand the whole matter, first we must consider what it is to be justified. This passage shews plainly, that he is justified who is reputed and taken for righteous before God, or whom the heavenly judge himself acquitteth as though he were innocent. Now David, excluding all men from this praise of innocence, intimates, that if there be any righteousness in the saints, it is not so perfect as that it can stand before God, and so he pronounces that all men are guilty before God, and cannot be acquitted but by confession of their just liability to punishment. Truly he might justly have boasted himself to be one of the perfectest, if any had been found in the world; he knew of what sort was the righteousness of Abraham and the rest of the holy fathers. Now seeing he spares neither himself nor them, he concludes that there is but one way for all men to pacify God, and that is by fleeing to his mercy. Whence we gather how devilish is the phrensy that possesses the minds of those who at this day prate still of perfect righteousness, that the remission of sins may be done away with. Surely, they would never burst out into such presumptuousness if they were not fraught with contempt of God within. They extol regeneration mightily, as though Christ's kingdom consisted altogether in pureness of life. But as they abolish the

chief article of the everlasting covenant concerning free reconciliation, which the faithful are commanded to seek daily, and puff up both themselves and others with insane and more than inebriate presumption, they betray their own barbarism. Therefore as they could find in their hearts to spit in God's face, so let us abhor and detest them. Yet this alone suffices them not; for even the papists confess, that if God should take upon him the part of a just judge in examining men's lives, all men are subject to just damnation. And in this behalf they are more sound, modest, and sober than those portentous cyclopes of whom we have spoken. But although the papists arrogate not perfect righteousness to themselves, yet, as they urge their own merits and satisfactions, they are far from the example of David. They acknowledge always some defect in their works, and therefore to obtain grace, they call mercy to their aid. But to be justified by works, and to be justified by faith, are opposed one to another in the scripture; and between those two there is no mean. Foolishly, therefore, do the papists invent a third righteousness, which partly should be purchased by their own works, and partly imputed by God of his tender forbearance. And certainly David herein, affirming that no man living would be able to stand before God, if his works should be called to judgment, does not set up that compound righteousness, but summons us directly to this consequence, that God will be favourable to us in respect that he is merciful. For whatsoever righteousness men shall think they bring, vanishes away before him.

3 *For the enemy, &c.*] After David has confessed that he suffers just punishment for his sins, now he comes down to his enemies, with whom to have made his beginning had been a preposterous order. And their cruelty is expressed thus, that they cannot be satisfied, but by the death of the holy man. Nay, rather, he says he is already bereft of his life if God succour him not speedily. For he compares not himself simply to a dead man, but to a decayed carcase; for by *the dead of the world*, he means those that were taken away out of the world long ago. And by these words he teaches, not only that he trusts that God will be his physician in a deadly disease, but also, that though his life were buried and forgotten long ago, yet is it in God's hand to send him a resurrection, whereby to restore his ashes to life.

4 And my spirit is troubled upon me: my heart is amazed in the midst of me.

5 I bethought me of the days of old; my mind

ran upon all thy doings ; my mind hath run upon all the work of thine hands.

6 I stretched out my hands unto thee ; my soul *longeth* after thee, as a land without water. Selah.

7 Make haste, answer me, O Lord ; my spirit fainteth : hide not thy face from me, for *then* shall I be like them that go down into the pit.

4 *And my spirit, &c.*] Having spoken of his outward miseries, now he confesses the infirmity of his mind, whereby we gather that his fortitude was not stony and insensate, but that when he was overwhelmed with sorrow as far as flesh could perceive, he kept himself upon his feet, only by staying himself upon faith and the grace of the Holy Ghost. By which example we are taught that if at any time afflictions enfeeble us, yea, or wellnigh kill us, yet must we not cease wrestling, because God will grant us at length to emerge provided our hearts are lifted up to him in their distresses. And in the next verse David declares that he had diligently sought for remedy to assuage his sorrows. For it is no marvel that many sink under their afflictions since they voluntarily resign themselves to sloth ; because they neglect to gather courage by calling God's grace to remembrance. True it is, that now and then our miseries are embittered by calling to mind how kindly God hath dealt with us, because the comparison excites and whets our minds the more. But David set him up another mark ; namely, that he might get courage by the former benefits of God. And truly the best way to assuage sorrow, is to have an eye to God's former benefits, when we are at the point of fainting. Neither does David mean those benefits only which he himself had had experience of from his childhood ; for in my judgment, they who so interpret it, confine it too much, seeing that the word *דָּפַק* is of wider extent. Therefore I doubt not but that, with his own private experience, he couples the ancient records, wherein any one might behold God's continual goodness towards those that are his. Let us also learn by his example, not only to consider the benefits that God hath bestowed upon ourselves, but also to call to remembrance how often he hath aided his servants, and to apply the whole to our own behoof. But if the bitterness of our grief be not assuaged at once, yet will profit ensue from it afterwards. For howsoever David complain here, that his cares and troubles were not relieved immediately by this comfort, yet proceeded he in meditating thereon, until at length it brought forth its fruits in due season. The word

נשׁו, as I have said before, signifies as well *to utter a thing with the tongue*, as *to muse upon it with the mind*; and therefore, some translate it, *I have treated of thy works*. But as the word נגנן also signifies *to meditate*, I think that the same thing is repeated twice, and that to denote his continued attention. For it happens often, that when our minds have glanced lightly at God's works, soon they fly away to something else; whence it is no wonder if no solid consolation fix itself in the mind. Wherefore, that our knowledge may not vanish away, it must be helped with continual heedfulness.

6 *I stretched out, &c.*] Here appears the utility of meditation: for it raised David's mind to fervour in praying, even as it must needs follow that our minds shall be ravished to seek God for the sweetness of his goodness, when we earnestly consider in what sort he hath always shewn himself to his servants, and also of what sort we have found him ourselves. For although calling upon God spring from faith, yet as the proofs of God's mighty power and goodness confirm faith itself, therewith also they are very good helps to relieve our faintness. Furthermore, he declares his earnestness by a goodly similitude, comparing his soul to a drouthy ground: for in extreme drouths we see the ground chap as though it opened its mouth to look for drink from heaven. David therefore means, that he comes to God with fervent desire, as though the moisture of life failed him; which he expresses more clearly in the next verse. And here again there appears no ordinary instance of faith, in that feeling himself faint, and drawing towards his grave, notwithstanding, he does not gaze about hither and thither with wavering mind, but abides steadfastly fixed on God alone. And although he had an arduous and sore encounter against the infirmity of his own flesh, yet the fainting of his spirit which he speaks of, was a more powerful incitement to quicken his zeal to pray, than if he had conquered his fears, sorrows, and griefs by stoical stubbornness. But it is always to be noted, that to the intent he may tie himself to God alone, he tears all other hopes out of his mind, and also adapts the very necessity itself to his purpose, making a chariot of it to mount up to God.

8 Make me to hear thy loving-kindness betimes; for in thee is my trust: shew me the way wherein I may walk; for unto thee have I lifted up my soul.

9 Lord, deliver me from mine enemies: I have hid *me* unto thee.

10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: let thy good Spirit lead me into the right land.

11 Lord, thou shalt quicken me for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of distress.

12 And for thy mercy's sake thou shalt scatter mine enemies, and destroy all them that persecute my soul: because I am thy servant.

8 *Make me to hear, &c.*] In this verse again he desires to have God's grace manifested to him, yea, and that with effect. When he says, *Make me to hear*, it seems an improper expression, because God's goodness is rather felt than heard. But as it would do us small service to receive God's benefits, except we tasted their savour by the perception of faith, David has done well to begin with hearing: for we see that worldlings cram themselves with them, without any sense of his goodness, because they give no ear to his word, nor have faith shining before them to shew them that God is their father. Some insipidly restrain the word *betimes* to the sacrifices, for we know they were wont to offer sacrifices twice a day, morning and evening. Others understand it more subtly, that God is said to form a new day, when he deals gently with his servants. Others will have it to be a metaphor, and to betoken a prosperous and joyful state; like as a sorrowful and miserable time is often betokened by darkness. But I marvel why such out of the way meanings should be sought for in this word, wherein he simply repeats that which he had said before, namely, *hie thee* or *make haste*. *Betimes*, therefore, imports as much as *in due season*, or *speedily*. He alleges *his hope* before God, as he does often elsewhere, for by *hope* we after a sort bind God, even as he also by offering himself freely to us, and promising to become our father, maketh a compact with us after the manner of men: it is therefore a kind of obligation. But yet by our so doing, we are so far off from bringing any worthiness or desert, that our trust is rather a witness of our lack and destitution. When he desires to have the way opened that he may walk in it, it is referred to his troubles; for his meaning his, that he stands as it were thunderstruck, so that he cannot stir a foot, except God make way for him; as if he should say, Lord, all the desires of my heart aim at thee, and therefore in such perplexity do thou supply me with counsel.

9 *Deliver me, &c.*] Nearly to the same purport is this prayer: for the importunateness of his enemies had fore-

closed all ways of escape. Moreover, some translate the word כִּסִּיתִי *to hope*, but the proper signification of it is, *to hide*, from which I would not recede. Notwithstanding, some resolve it thus; that David, perceiving himself exposed to a thousand deaths, betook himself to the covert of the shadow of God, and shrouded himself under his protection: which exposition I think probable. Certainly I rather embrace that, than this other, which pleases many by reason of its ingenuity; namely, that David wandered not hither and thither, but held himself content with the witness of God alone, and called upon him secretly by himself.

10 *Teach me to do, &c.*] Now he mounts higher. For he not only desires to be delivered from outward troubles, but also (which is the chief thing to be governed) by God's Spirit, so that he may turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but hold himself in true uprightness. Which prayer ought immediately to occur to our remembrance, as often as temptations disquiet us anything sorely. For nothing is more hard, than so to submit ourselves to God as that we may seek no unlawful remedies. Seeing, therefore, that cares, fear, anguish, weariness, and griefs, often move many men to attempt they care not what, let us after the example of David desire God to cast a bridle upon us, lest by compulsion of the flesh we should be driven whither we ought not. But the manner of speaking is to be marked advisedly. For his desire is, not only to be taught what God's will is, but also to be instructed and framed to obedience, that he may do it. For the first manner of teaching would be to small effect, because when God sheweth what is right, we follow not forthwith whither he calleth us, until he have drawn our affections to him. And therefore we had need that God should be our schoolmaster and teacher, not with the dead letter only, but with the secret instinct of the Holy Ghost. Nay rather, he executeth the office of a master towards us three ways. For first he teacheth us by his word, secondly he enlighteneth our minds by his Spirit, and thirdly he engraveth his doctrine in our hearts, that we may obey it with true and earnest consent. For the hearing of the word would of itself profit nothing, neither would the understanding of it avail us, unless willing obedience of the heart were added to them. Neither indeed, says he, Teach me, that I may be able to do it, (as the papists dream, who think the grace of God avails no further than to make us inclinable to goodness,) but he states decisively, the actual effect. The same thing confirms he in the next member, when he says, *Let thy good Spirit lead me*. For he wishes to have the Holy Ghost to be his guide, not only so far forth as he enlighteneth men's minds, but also in



that he leadeth us as it were by the hand to consent to his teaching by turning our hearts effectually. Moreover, the circumstance of the place admonishes us to take diligent heed that peevish affections carry us not away, when we have contention with the wicked. And as we have not discretion or ability of ourselves to bridle them and restrain them, we must always wish that the Holy Ghost may be our guide, to subdue the headiness of them. Meanwhile, we are taught generally what freewill can do, from which David takes here all right choice, until the heart be framed by God's Spirit to holy obedience. And the word *lead* confirms that which I touched upon just now; namely, that David feigns not a middle grace, as the papists babble, that leaves a man in suspense, but expresses a far greater efficacy, according also as Paul teaches, Phil. ii. 13; *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to perform, according to his good pleasure.* I take *the right land* metaphorically for *uprightness*. For David's meaning is, that as soon as we step aside from God's good pleasure, we are led away into error. Moreover, the epithet applied to the word *Spirit*, is tacitly contrasted with the depravity that is bred in us by nature, as if David had said, all the thoughts of men are sinful and crooked, till the grace of the Holy Ghost correct them by the right rule. Whence it follows, that fleshly reason tells us nothing that is whole or sound. I grant, indeed, that the reprobate are carried away by an evil spirit of God, because God executeth his judgments by the devils. But I think not that David spoke so subtly in this place, but rather that he condemned his own wickedness, and yielded the praise of goodness, righteousness, and sincerity, to the Spirit of God. Furthermore, where he says, *thou art my God*, he shews that he fetches not assurance of obtaining elsewhere than from the free adoption and the promises. For it is not at our appointment to make him our God, until he prevent us of his own free accord.

11 *Lord, thou shalt, &c.*] He confirms better by this expression, that he fetches not assurance of welfare out of any other fountain than God's mere bounteousness. For if he brought anything of his own, then would not the cause reside in God only. But he is said to help us for his name's sake, when, finding nothing in us that may purchase his favour, he is induced by his own goodness alone. And to the same purpose tends the word *righteousness*. For God hath ordained the welfare of the faithful to be the matter whereon to shew forth his righteousness, as I have said heretofore. At the same time also he repeats that which he had said of the vast magnitude of his afflictions. For in desiring to be

quickened, he confesses that he is after a sort dead, or doomed to death, if God, in whose hand are the issues of death, Psalm lxviii. 21, recover him not by some secret resurrection.

12 *And for thy mercy's sake, &c.*] In this verse also he again inculcates the same thing that he has spoken four or five times before; namely, that he hopes for life from the mere goodness of God. For although God seem rigorous in destroying the wicked, yet does David affirm that the vengeance which God taketh of them shall be to him an assurance of his fatherly goodwill towards him. And truly for the most part God's rigour and mercy meet each other. For when he purposeth to stretch out his hand to save his servants, he darteth out the thunderbolts of his wrath against their enemies. In short, he goeth forth armed to rescue his servants, according as he speaketh in Isaiah lxiii. 4; *The day of vengeance is in my heart, and this is the year of my deliverance.* Moreover, when he calls himself God's servant, he boasts not of his services, but rather commends God's grace, to whom he ought to think himself beholden for it. For this dignity of being accounted one of God's servants, is not achieved by our own labour and policy, but depends upon his free election, whereby he vouchsafed to register us in the number and order of his servants, even before we were born, according as the same David expresses more plainly in another place; *I am thy servant, thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid*, Psalm cxvi. 16. For it is in effect the same as if he had made himself God's client, and should resign his life to God's patronage.

## PSALM CXLIV.

*This Psalm is a combination of thanksgiving and prayers. For David, extolling mightily the largeness of God's gifts wherewith he had been adorned, (whether it were because he saw the whole course of man's life exposed to many inconveniences, or whether it was because he had yet much to do with froward folk,) makes suit therewith, that God would continue the same graces, even to the end. It differs from the eighteenth Psalm, because there he does but triumph, his kingdom being restored to peace and his affairs flowing prosperously, but here he intersperses some marks of solicitude and fear, by reason that the remnant of his enemies still kept him employed.*

[*David's.*]

1 Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to make war.

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and in whom I trust; which subdueth my people under me.

3 Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest know him! or the son of man, that thou shouldest think upon him!

4 Man is like vanity: and his days are as a shadow that passeth by.

1 *Blessed be the Lord, &c.*] It appears plainly, that as David magnified God's grace with such glorious encomiums, he had not only enjoyed the kingdom, but also obtained signal victories. In calling God *his strength*, he confesses that whatsoever strength he has, was given him of God, not only because that of a rude shepherd he was made a valiant warrior, but also because it was the singular gift of God that he continued so. And this word *strength* seems to suit the place better than the word *rock*; for immediately after he adds in way of exposition, that he was trained to war by the instruction of God. For no doubt by those words he acknowledges that although he were of a martial spirit, yet had he not been calculated to wage wars, if he had not been made a new man. For what a trial of his skill did he afford in the case of Goliath! doubtless, that attempt of his had been a mockery, if he had not been so armed with the secret power of God, as that he needed not human helps.

2 *My goodness, &c.*] It is a hard phrase to Latin ears in a passive signification, as it is taken among the Hebrews. Even as also in another place, where he terms himself *God's king*, Ps. xviii. 51, not that he has authority over God, but because God had created and ordained him king. Forasmuch, then, as he had felt God so many ways good to him, he terms him his *goodness*; meaning that whatsoever good things he possesses, flow all from God. Although the throng of words that follows might seem superfluous, yet make they much to the confirmation of faith. We know how slippery men's minds are, and especially how easily they fall from the constancy of faith, when a storm of any severity bears upon them. Therefore, if God promise us help in this infirmity to stay us up by one word, it will not suffice us. Nay, however many props he putteth under us, yet not only do we suffer many vacillations from time to time, but also forgetfulness of his grace steals upon us, which in a manner casts down our spirits. Wherefore, we must understand that David's gathering together so many titles in commendation of God's grace, is not only to testify his own thankfulness, but also to arm the godly at all points against all the assaults of Satan and the world. Moreover, not without cause does he reckon it one of God's chief benefits, that he keeps the people in obedience to him. Whereas some will have *עַמִּים* to be put for *עַמִּים*, and translate it *nations*, I wonder how so constrained an interpretation should please them, since David means simply, that the state of his realm was not brought in order so much by his own wisdom, strength, policies, and authority, as by God's secret grace. And appositely has he used the word *פָּרַשׁ*, which signifies *to spread out*. For whereas some understand by this spreading out of the people, that the people sat merry and happy at their ease, seems far-fetched. Not a whit more do I admit what others would have; namely, the people were cast down as it were, to be trampled under foot; for such violent dominion among God's elect people, and in his holy heritage, had not been so desirable. But when the people obey laws gladly and willingly, and every man quietly becomes conformable, God's blessing shines forth more effectually. And fitly, as I said, is such an even state of things called *a spreading out*, wherein is nothing disorderly or confused. Therefore, after David has thanked God for the victories that he has obtained against his foreign enemies, he therewith also gives him thanks for ordering the state of his realm. And truly, considering he was an obscure person, and also that he was hated for the slanderous reports of him, it was scarce to be believed that ever he should have had a quiet reign. Therefore,

that beyond hope the people suddenly submitted themselves to him, so wonderful an alteration was the conspicuous work of God.

3 *Lord, what is man, &c.*] He amplifies God's grace by a comparison. For having shewn how singularly well he had been dealt with, he turns his eyes into himself, and making exclamation, demands, Who am I, to whom God vouchsafeth to let himself down? indeed the words are spoken generally of all mankind. Nevertheless, this circumstance must be marked, that David considering how mean and abject his own estate was, commends God's grace the more. In other places he alleges the things that might humble himself individually, but here he confines himself to the consideration of the common nature. Nay, whereas by discussing man's nature he might have reported other things also, for which they are unworthy of God's love and regard, he does but briefly observe that they are like smoke or a shadow. Whence it follows that God unfoldeth the riches of his goodness towards them without their desert. Meanwhile we are warned, that as often as we forget ourselves, so that we think ourselves to be somewhat, the shortness of life alone ought to beat down all our overweening and stateliness. For when the scripture treats of the frailty of mankind, it implies therewith the things that are of necessity annexed to it. For seeing that our life vanishes away in a moment, what is there to be found that is stable in us? It is to be learned, moreover, that we never weigh God's grace sufficiently well, except we bethink us of our estate. For then is God's due yielded to him indeed, when we acknowledge that he doeth us good undeserved. The rest let the readers fetch out of the eighth Psalm, where there is a nearly similar expression.

5 Lord, bow thy heavens, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth the lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

7 Send thine hand from above; pluck me out of the great waters, and out of the hand of the strangers' children.

8 For their mouth hath spoken deceit; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

5 *Lord, bow thy heavens, &c.*] After he has extolled God's former graces according to their desert, he desires succour for the preservation of his kingdom according to the present need. And as he had gloried in God in a heroic spirit,

so does he retain the same stateliness of words in his prayers also, requiring him to bow the heavens, to make the mountains smoke, to trouble the air with thundering, and to shoot out his arrows. By which form of expression doubtless he disperses all the impediments which are too hard for us to get over, in order that we may comprehend God's infinite power by faith. In Psalm xviii. he commends the helps that he had felt at God's hand, almost in the same forms of speech; meaning thereby that God had preserved him by wonderful and unwonted means. For although there appear not always some such sign, as often as God succoured him, yet deservedly does he advance above the common course of nature, the things that had happened beyond hope. But here he had another purpose; namely, that as many deaths pressed upon him, which would have overwhelmed his mind with despair, he might conceive of God's incredible power, whereunto all the impediments of the world must needs give place. Doubtless it was not for nought that he soared in these hyperbolic expressions, lest he might enclose his welfare in worldly means. For nothing had been more absurd at such a time, than to measure God's mighty power by ordinary means.

7 *Send thy hand, &c.*] Now by one word we understand to what purpose the former figures tend; namely, that since earthly helps failed, God should stretch forth his hand out of heaven, because the greatness of the peril required an extraordinary manner of helping. And therefore he compares his enemies to great and deep waters. When he calls them *strangers*, it has reference not so much to the original of their birth as to their disposition and behaviour. For it is improperly wrested to the uncircumcised, seeing that David rather touches upon the degenerate Jews that boasted falsely in the flesh. And a little after he intimates that he has to deal, not so much with foreigners that fought against him with force of arms and open defiance, as with intestine enemies. By the *right hand of falsehood*, some understand rash attempts, which David hoped should be disappointed. Others restrain it to the established form of taking an oath, as if he had called them perjured. Others expound it, that they no less execute their wicked devices with the hand, than lie with their tongues. But forasmuch as in making promises, it has been an ordinary custom to strike hands, (according as Solomon says, Prov. xi. 21, *Hand to hand*;) I doubt not but he means falsehearted, treacherous, and deceitful persons. For full well agree these two things together, namely, a false tongue and a guileful hand; as if he had said, whatsoever they promise,



yet is there nothing to be hoped for at their hand, because their fair speaking and their giving of their hand is but to deceive men.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God : upon the viol and the psaltery will I sing unto thee.

10 Which giveth welfare unto kings, and rescueth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Rescue me, and pluck me out of the hand of the strangers' children, whose mouth hath spoken deceit, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

9 *I will sing, &c.*] Again gathering courage, he addresses himself to giving of thanks, not doubting but God will maintain his benefits even to the end. Now I have said heretofore, that by a new song is meant something rare and singular. Whence it follows that David had hoped for more than man's reason could conceive. For, according to the greatness of the help, he promises an unwonted kind of song, which he distinguishes from the daily sacrifices by a notable epithet. As touching the *viol and the psaltery*, I have told you heretofore that these things formed a part of the training under the law. But chiefly the argument or matter of the song is to be marked ; that is, that David had not only been defended, but also rescued by God the preserver of kings, by whose authority and command he had been created and anointed king. Whereas, here seems to some to be a tacit antithesis between kings and common persons, as if David should say that not only the inferior sort of men, but also even the mightiest, who seem abundantly secured by their own power and strength, are preserved by the hand of God, I cannot tell whether the notion is well grounded. I prefer a different method, that although God maintain all mankind, yet he extendeth his care after a peculiar sort to the preservation of civil order, as upon it depends the welfare of men in general. It is the same, therefore, as if he had called him the defender and guardian of kingdoms. For as the name of sovereignty is odious, and no man would willingly be at another man's beck, nor anything more contrary to nature than subjection and bondage, all men, shaking off the yoke, would vie with each other in overthrowing kings' thrones, if they were not shielded by God's secret defence. At the same time David distinguishes himself from other kings, like as in another place he is called the first-begotten of all kings ; Ps. lxxxix.

28. Or at least, placing himself in the highest rank, because he was anointed with the holy oil above all the rest, he says that God's grace towards him surpassed all others. And for honour's sake he challenges to himself the special style of God's servant. For although all kings are God's servants, and that Cyrus, by way of distinction, is called God's servant in Is. xlv. 1; yet, as no heathen king ever acknowledged God's calling, and David at that time was the only one in the whole world who was endued with lawful authority to reign with full assurance, this mark of difference is with good reason given him. I doubt not but that under the expression *the hurtful sword*, he comprehends all the perils which he had passed through for so many years, so that it might be truly said of him that he came to the royal throne by sundry deaths, and was established in his throne even amid deaths themselves.

12 For our sons are as the plants that have grown up in their youth; and our daughters as the corner stones that be polished after the likeness of a palace.

13 Our corners be full, passing from sort to sort: our ewes increase into thousands, and into ten thousands in our streets.

14 Our oxen can away with the burden; *there is* no breaking in, no going out, nor no crying in our streets.

15 Blessed are the people that are in such case: blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.

12 *For our sons, &c.*] Some understand these three last verses in the manner of wishing. Others think that David rejoices on the behalf of himself and of the whole realm, because all kinds of good things flowed prosperously upon them at that time, by the blessing of God. And truly I doubt not but David, together with his thanksgiving, declares how bounteously God had dealt with his people. Nevertheless, it is not inapplicable to suppose that he should at the same time pray for the continuance of God's benefits, the course whereof was like to have been broken off by flagitious men and household enemies, if the troubles and distractions that existed had not been redressed by God. His drift then is this, that God should not suffer such goodly blessings, wherewith he loaded his people, to decay and come to nought. And first he begins with their children, purposing to commend whose generous nature, he compares the sons to *plants that be well grown in their*

*youth.* For if trees thicken not betimes while they are yet tender, scarcely do they ever become tall. He says that the maidens are like *corner stones well and cunningly hewn*; as though he should say, that adorned a house by their elegance and beauty. Moreover, that a generous and well-trained offspring should hold the first place among God's earthly benefits is no wonder, of which matter I have treated more at large heretofore. But seeing that David speaks in the person of the whole realm, and intermixes his own case with the state of all persons in common, we gather that he was far from being devoted to his own exclusive interests.

13 *Our corners, &c.*] Others translate it *storehouses*, which I reject not. Nevertheless, seeing that the word is derived from the same root that the word **קַרְנֵי** is, which we had in the last verse, that which I have set down already, namely, *that our corners be full*, seemed to agree better with the original. Some take the participle **מַפְיָקִים** transitively, and translate it, *bringing forth*, but the meaning is pretty much the same; namely, that abundance of all good things springs out of all corners. Moreover, where it is said **וְכָל זֶרַע נֶאֱמָר**, I think, rather, that here is betokened a manifold and varied assortment of all good things; than that, as some interpreters would have it, there flowed such plentiful increase, that specific kinds were jumbled together, and a confused heap made of the boundless abundance. For there is no necessity to resort to that harsh hyperbole, and the words expressly convey a different meaning: for if it had been a confused heap, he should have said, simply, **וְכָל זֶרַע**. The effect therefore is, that the realm was so enriched, not only with grain, but also with all kinds of fruits, that every corner was full of all sorts of them, even to satiety.

14 *Our oxen, &c.*] **סָבֵל** signifies, *to bear, or carry*, whence some take **מְסֻבֵּלִים** for *strong*: because, unless oxen were well sinewed, they would not be meet for carriage or for draught. Others, however, understand it, that they were loaded with fatness: on which point I will not contend, because it imports not greatly to the effect of the matter. This, rather, is worth noting, that God's fatherly loving-kindness is praised in this respect, that he grudgeth not to look to the comforts of his servants, even in the minutest things. Therefore, as in the former verse he ascribed the fruitfulness of their cattle and sheep to God's grace, so now he says that oxen are fed by him, that we may know that he neglecteth no part of our life. But, because it would be little to our behoof to swim in abundance of all things, except we might enjoy them, he adds also, that by the benefit of God the people are in quiet and tranquillity.

And, first, by *breaking in*, I doubt not the invasion of enemies is denoted, as if he should say that the enemies break not in upon them with force, by bursting open their gates, or beating down their walls. I marvel why many take *going out* for exile, as if he had said, The people are not caught and carried away out of the borders of their country. For, in my judgment, he meant to declare, simply, that there needed no sallies to repulse enemies, seeing no man offered them harm or trouble. To the same point pertains the *crying in the streets*, which arises from a sudden alarm. The meaning, then, is, that the cities are not troubled with any unquietness, because God keepeth their enemies far from them.

15 *Blessed are the people, &c.*] He concludes in thiswise, that God's favour towards those that are his is sufficiently avouched and manifested. If any one should object, that he savours of nothing but grossness and earth, when he estimates man's happiness by perishable goods, I answer, that these two things must be read in connection; namely, that they are blessed, who, in their abundance, perceive that they stand in God's favour, and who so taste of his grace in his earthly blessings, as that, being assured in themselves of his fatherly love, they still seek after the true inheritance. Neither is it against reason to say, that they are happy whom God blesseth in this world, so that they be not blind in the fruition and use, or so besotted and insensate as to neglect the giver. For as God suffereth us to be destitute of many helps of this life, surely this, his so bounteous providence, is a bright mirror of his rare love. And what is more to be wished than to be regarded of God? especially where men's minds are not so dull but that they can gather that God is their father, seeing he nourisheth them so liberally; for at this mark must all things be levelled. Otherwise it were better for us to starve for hunger at once, than to be pampered like brute beasts, and not to hold this for a chief point, that they are blessed whom God hath chosen to be his people. Meanwhile it is to be considered, that though God give us some prelibation of happiness in meat and drink, yet are not those faithful ones wretched that have much ado to live through penury and want: for God supplieth their lack, of whatsoever sort it is, with better comforts.

## PSALM CXLV.

*The prophet, weighing with himself God's wonderful wisdom, goodness, and justice, first in the government of the whole world, but chiefly in maintaining, cherishing, and ruling mankind, is lifted up to the celebration of his praises. And after he has reckoned up the commendations of his providence, in general, at length he comes down to the peculiar grace which he vouchsafeth to his faithful ones.*

[*David's Praise.*]

1 I will extol thee, O God, my King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Daily will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the Lord, and much to be praised; and there is no searching out of his greatness.

4 One generation shall praise thy works unto another, and they shall declare thy power.

5 I will think upon the beauty of thy glorious majesty, and upon the words of thy wonders.

6 And they shall declare the power of thy dreadful acts, and I will shew forth thy greatness.

1 *I will extol thee, &c.*] David not only shews what he will do, but also stirs up and exhorts both himself and others to this godly duty of offering altogether to God the sacrifices of praises which he hath deserved. For he declares that the end for which God is so beneficent to mankind, is, that he may be worshipped with godly thankfulness. Also he commends perseverance of endeavour. For, seeing that God continueth his benefits, it is neither right nor reason that we should be weary of praising him. Therefore, as he offereth his faithful servants new matter of praise from time to time, so moveth he them to thankfulness, that they should occupy themselves in it during the whole course of their life. For when he says *daily*, assiduity is denoted. Afterwards he adds, that though he should live many ages, he would do so still, even to the last end. And the repetition avails not a little to indicate earnestness. Now, as it is likely that this Psalm was made at such time as David's kingdom flourished,

it is a circumstance worth noting, that in calling God his king, he rebukes himself and all other worldly princes, lest any earthly highness should rival the lustre of God's glory. And this he confirms better in the next verse, where, by exclaiming that God's greatness is infinite, he admonishes us that then only we praise God aright, when we are, as it were, amazed at the immeasurableness of his mighty power, or are transported with admiration. Out of that fountain of admiration will afterwards flow due praise of God, according to the limited extent of our ability.

4 *One generation, &c.*] Here he shews generally that all men are created and sustained in this life, that they should employ their energies to the setting forth of God's praises. And there is a tacit antithesis between the eternal name of God, and the immortality of glory that great men seem to acquire by their noble deeds. For though human virtues are renowned in story, yet is the case far otherwise with God, who daily reneweth the remembrance of his works, or rather cherisheth it and maketh it live in our hearts by the advantages continually brought home to us, so that it may never cease for a moment. In the same respect also he says, that the *brightness or beauty of his majesty is glorious*, that he may lift up himself and others the better to admiration of it. I take *the words of God's wonders*, for the incomprehensible reason of his works, because they are so many miracles that absorb all our powers of thought. And hereby we gather, that God's greatness does not lie hid in his mysterious essence; on which those who dispute with subtlety, passing over his works, do but trifle heartlessly, since true religion requires not a speculative, but a practical knowledge. And after he has said, *I will utter*, or *I will think upon*, (for, as we have seen in other places, the word *אֲשִׁירָא* may be taken both ways,) by turning his discourse to others, he intimates, that there shall always be in the world some proclaimers of God's goodness and justice, and also that God's attributes are worthy to have their fame sounded forth by the tongues of all men with one consent. But howsoever others may neglect this privilege, and defraud God of his due honour, he shews that nevertheless he will be so diligent on his own behalf, that he will chant God's praises with all his soul, though others hold their peace. Some think that by the *power or strength of God's terrible acts*, the same thing is repeated: although the judgments that God executeth against profane despisers of him seem to be characterized.

7 They shall break out into the mention of thy great goodness, and sing aloud of thy righteousness.



8 Gracious and pitiful is the Lord ; slow to wrath, and great in mercy.

9 The Lord is good unto all men ; and his mercies are over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord ; and thy meek ones shall bless thee.

11 They shall shew the glory of thy kingdom, and speak of thy power ;

12 To make his power, and the glorious renown of his kingdom, known unto men.

13 Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

7 *They shall, &c.*] Because the word *עלל* signifies properly *to gush out*; when it is transferred to speaking, some will have it to imply a vehemence, so that it should be not simply *to speak*, but *to give full utterance*, even as abundant water flows out of a spring ; and the latter word *נננ*, which signifies *to cry out* or *sing aloud*, answers thereto. Moreover, *to celebrate the memorial of God's goodness*, is as much as to call to remembrance God's goodness, even as it is known to us by our own feeling and experience, that we may spread it abroad. For howsoever we may be constrained to grant that God is worthy of praise in all his blessed attributes, yet is there nothing that touches us more than his goodness, whereby he cometh down to us, and sheweth himself our father. And therefore it is this sweetness whereby David allures us to be heartily and cheerfully inclined to praise God, or rather to break out into praises, according to the meaning which the metaphor in the first verb conveys.

8 *Gracious and merciful, &c.*] Now he illustrates in many words that goodness, saying that God is forward to grace ; for so does the word *נננ* properly signify, and also that, condoling, as it were, with us in our miseries, he willingly succoureth us. But it is to be noted that David took these titles of commendation from that celebrated passage of Moses, *Exod. xxxiv. 6*. And seeing that the prophets drew their doctrine out of the fountain of the law, it is no marvel though they make singular account of the vision reported there, for God's nature is nowhere expressed more evidently and familiarly than there. And therefore David, purposing to point out briefly what it most concerns us to know concerning God, borrows his words from thence. And it is not the least point of his gracious goodness that he allures us to him with such comfortable words. For if he should allege his mighty power,

that would rather strike us down with fear, than lift us up. The papists, indeed, describe God as terrible, and one who chases all men out from his presence, whereas the right knowing of him allures us to seek to him. Whence it follows that the more close the communion any one holds with God, the better has he profited in the knowledge of him. Now if God not only be willing to gratify us, if I may so term it, but also is said to be touched with sympathy for our miseries, so that he becometh the gentler towards us the more miserable we are, what a doltishness were it, not to run to meet him forthwith ! But as we keep away his goodness from us, and shut ourselves out of his presence by our sins, in vain would the prophets treat of his grace and mercy, unless his goodness overleaped that obstacle. And therefore it was necessary that that which follows should be added ; namely, that as he is *great in mercy* he pardoneth sins, and beareth with men's faults, so that he is gracious to them even without their desert. Now though God do also patiently bear with the wicked, yet because they are not capable of apprehending forgiveness, this doctrine is directed peculiarly to the faithful only, who perceive God's goodness by the lively feeling of faith. For to the reprobates it is said, *What have you to do with the day of the Lord ? That day is darkness, and not light ; sorrow, and not joy ;* Amos, v. 18. And we see how vehemently the prophet Nahum thunders against them even in his opening, Nahum i. 3. For after he has rehearsed these commendations out of Moses, lest they might take heart from them, he presently introduces on the contrary part, *God is rigorous and severe, a terrible and an inexorable judge.* It remains, then, that they who have provoked God's wrath by their sins should sue for his favour again by faith.

9 *The Lord is good, &c.*] This sentence has a larger scope than the former : for here David declares that God not only pardoneth sins mercifully, of his fatherly loving-kindness, but also is good to all men without exception, even as *he maketh his sun to rise upon the good and evil,* Matt. v. 46. Though, therefore, the forgiveness of sins is a treasure shut up from the reprobates, yet is their malice and wickedness no hindrance to God, but that he poureth out his goodness upon them also, but in suchwise as that they devour it without feeling it. Meanwhile, only the faithful know what it is to enjoy the favour and goodness of God, according as it is said in another place, *go unto him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed : taste ye, and see how sweet the Lord is,* Ps. xxxiv. 5, 8. When it is said soon after, that *God's mercy extendeth itself to all his works,* it must not seem either absurd or harsh : for

since our sins involve all the world in God's curse, there is room for God's mercy everywhere, so that it succours even the brute beasts.

10 *All thy works, &c.*] David concludes that though many overwhelm God's praises with wicked silence, yet they shine forth everywhere of themselves, and meet men of their own accord, and as it were cry aloud in dumb creatures. Afterwards he adds a special commendation to the faithful, who both have eyes to consider God's works; and also know that there is nothing which they should rather do, than exercise themselves in setting forth God's benefits. As for that which follows immediately, namely, *they shall shew the glory of thy kingdom*, I refer it only to the faithful. Nevertheless, if any one prefer to apply it generally to all God's creatures, I will not contend with him. But the distinct manner of teaching whereof David makes mention here, agrees not but with the saints: and therefore I keep still the future tense in the verbs, which others turn into the optative. Further, under the word *kingdom* David conveys that the manifestation of God's works tends to this end, that the whole world should be brought under awe of him, and submit themselves to his government. And he commends the excellence of his kingdom, that men may know that all things are perverted and confused, unless God alone sit above all. Afterwards he exclaims that this kingdom is not transitory, as all worldly kingdoms are, but stands steadfast for evermore. And that this everlastingness may be considered the more attentively, exclaiming with admiration, he directs his discourse to God himself.

14 The Lord is he that upholdeth all that fall, and he that lifteth up all that are stooping.

15 The eyes of all trust unto thee; and thou givest them their meat in his season.

16 Thou openest thy hand, and of thy good pleasure fillest every living thing.

14 *The Lord upholdeth, &c.*] He recounts certain examples of God's goodness and mercy, by which it appears that God reigneth not over men but for the common welfare of all. By such as are *falling* and *stooping*, he means metaphorically all such as are oppressed with adversity, and would presently sink under the load, if God did not stretch out his hand to them to stay them up. The effect is, that God regardeth the afflictions of men, to succour them in their distress. Whence it follows, that he deserveth

not only that all men should reverently honour him that reigneth in heaven, but also that they should be glad and eager to resign themselves to his governance. And by the way he admonishes us that as many as seek comfort of their miseries at God's hand, shall not be disappointed.

15 *The eyes of all, &c.*] David alleges another proof of God's goodness, that in ministering food to all living things, he sheweth himself as a father of a family towards them. Some interpreters, induced by the word *trust*, restrain this seeking for sustenance at the heavenly father's hand, to those only who are endued with reason and understanding, because the brute beasts seek their food only by sight and scent. Nevertheless, though there be no reason bred in them by nature, to make them depend upon God's providence, yet as necessity itself, by a certain mysterious instinct, compels them to seek food, they are said, not without cause, to trust to God; even as in Ps. cxlvii. 9, the young ravens are said to call upon him. As for those that restrain it to men, they cannot even by this means escape absurdity: for the wicked are no more attendant upon God's fatherly providence, than oxen and asses. Seeing, then, that the order of nature is so disposed, that all things living have an inclination towards their maker, we may with propriety consider that the affection is put here for the thing itself. And in the next verse all doubt is taken away, for there it is said that every living thing is filled. And he says that *their meat is given them, and in its season*, because the variety itself does the more illustrate God's providence, inasmuch as each of them has a different manner of feeding, and various sorts of food are distributed and adapted to their various necessities: in which respect David terms them their meats. The pronoun relative *his*, which is put before the word *season*, is not of the plural number, and therefore it cannot be understood of the living things. Therefore by *his time*, is meant *due season*: for even in this behalf also God commendeth his own wonderful dispensation, in that he hath appointed for hay-time, harvest-time, and grape-time, each a certain season, and hath so disposed the courses of the year, that cattle are fed one while with grass, another while with hay or straw, yea and with acorns also, and other fruits: for if he poured out his store all at once, the gathering of it would be very inconvenient. And therefore the due season deserves no small praise in the yearly increase of fruits and food.

16 *Thou openest, &c.*] This is an apt graphic representation: for as most men pass by with closed eyes, the wonderful goodness of God, which shines forth con-

spicuously in this most beautiful order of nature, David brings in God stretching out his hand, and distributing food to all living creatures. We absurdly limit our views to the earth, which yields us food, and to natural second causes. David, therefore, to correct this error, exhibits before our eyes, as in a picture, God's opened hand, as though he were putting food into our mouths. In the second member, some take the word *לִפְנֵי* for *a desire*, as if he had said, God giveth food to each kind of living thing, according to their own liking or desire: and certainly, a little after it will be taken in the same sense. Nevertheless, others had rather refer it to God, that he feedeth living things of his own mere grace and bounty: for it were not enough to believe that food is ministered to us from heaven, unless we take this second member with it, that God is bountiful of his own mere goodwill, and not moved by any outward cause, to provide so abundantly for all living things. Thus will the cause be put here for the effect: for the means of sustenance are the effects of this good pleasure, as the gifts of grace are the effects of grace. Now, that both men and beasts are often pinched with hunger and famine, must be ascribed to the corruption of nature. For since the fall of Adam, that most beautiful order of nature, which God had appointed at the beginning, often fails by reason of our sins; and yet this bounteousness of God's, which David commends, appears always in the mutilated remains of it: for even in the greatest dearth of the fruits of the earth, there is no year so hungry and barren, wherein God openeth not his hand.

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and merciful in all his works.

18 The Lord is near unto all them that call upon him, unto all that call upon him in truth.

19 He will fulfil the desire of such as fear him: he will also hear their cry, and save them.

20 The Lord preserveth all that love him; and he will destroy all the wicked.

21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and all flesh shall bless his holy name for ever and ever.

17 *The Lord is righteous, &c.*] Now he treats not only of God's bounteousness in giving food daily unto all living things, but he comprises other parts of his providence also; as that he chastiseth men's sins, bridleth the wicked, trieth

his servants' patience with the cross, and finally regulateth the government of the world by judgments unknown to us. Now although it seem to be but an ordinary commendation, because it is in everybody's mouth, yet is it a mark of rare wisdom to hold to this principle, that God is righteous in all his works, so that the praise thereof may always remain entire unto him, fast settled in our hearts, howsoever the world be tossed upside down. For after that all men have confessed God to be righteous, the most part of them find fault with his over-great rigour as soon as they are afflicted, and if he grant not their desires out of hand, they murmur against him; and finally, nothing is more common with them than to arraign his justice. And therefore, not without cause is this righteousness, which is everywhere unworthily mangled by the malicious judgments of men, defended against so great unthankfulness; as if he should say, Although the world deface God's glory with their contumelious speeches, yet does it stand fast, and remain unimpaired for ever. And he purposely expresses, *in all his ways and in all his works*. For we defraud God of his due praise if we acknowledge not that his righteousness holdeth on uniformly through the whole course of his works. But nothing is more difficult than to keep down affections of the flesh, that they heave not up against God's judgments in time of adversity, when he seemeth either to forsake us or to persecute us wrongfully: even as there is a notable story reported of the emperor Maurice, who, when he saw his children put to death by the falsehearted and wicked traitor Phocas, being soon about to be hurried also himself to the slaughter, cried out ever and anon, Righteous art thou, O Lord, and rightful are thy judgments. Now, then, as that good man set this shield against the most fierce temptations, so also let us learn to bridle our minds, that God's righteousness may evermore retain its due praise. Though David goes yet further, that God, even when he seemeth most rigorous, is so far from cruelty that he tempereth even his sorest judgments with equity and mercy.

18 *The Lord is near, &c.*] This doctrine pertains most properly to the faithful, whom God inviteth to him by a singular privilege, promising to be favourable to their requests. And certainly faith would lie idle or dead without prayer, whereby the spirit of adoption manifests and exerts itself, and whereby we testify that we are certain and assured of all his promises. The effect then is, that God's inestimable favour towards the faithful is seen in this, that he sheweth himself a father to them. Furthermore, as many doubtings creep upon us as often as we have any petition to



make to God, and so we either come to him timidly, or faint for lack of courage and heart, or else our faith languishes through fear; therefore David avouches that God is easy to be entreated of all men without exception that call upon him. But because the greater part of the world mar and defile their calling upon God by their own inventions, in the other member there is prescribed the true manner of praying, that is, in truth. Though men resort to God coldly, or rather, swelling either with pride or displeasure, wrangle with him in their praying, yet they complain that he heareth them not, as though there were no difference between praying and prating, or between testifying one's faith and hypocrisy. The greater part, wrapped in their own unbelief, scarcely think that God is in heaven. Some could find in their hearts to pluck him thence; others would he should be beholden to them; and others devise some way of appeasing him with little trouble: and so the ordinary manner of prayer is but a frivolous and empty ceremony. And as nearly the whole world come running to God in their necessity, scarce one in ten brings with him one particle of faith or repentance. But better it were to leave God's name in oblivion than to make it subject to such mockeries. Not without cause, therefore, is truth required in prayer, that it may proceed from an unfeigned heart. And of the untruth which is contrary to this unfeignedness, the special kinds are diverse, and in a manner innumerable. For unbelief, doubting, impatience, murmuring, counterfeit humility, corrupt desires, are so many falsehoods. And as this is a doctrine of no small importance, David confirms it again in the next verse by way of exposition. And the repetition is to be marked advisedly; for our nature is inclinable to unbelief, so that few or none believe steadfastly that they pray not in vain at the calling of God. Hence it comes to pass that untoward impulses drive their unsettled minds to and fro. Even as in Popedom they have devised themselves many patrons, because they made in a manner no account at all of embracing with unwavering faith the promises of God, whereby he allureth us to him. To the intent, then, that the gates may stand wider open, the Holy Ghost inculcateth here, by the mouth of David, that God granteth the desires of all the godly: how effectually which saying ought to pierce into our minds cannot be expressed in words. For what is man, that God should obey his will, since it would rather become us to reverence his highness, and humbly to obey his commandment! But yet of his own accord he humbleth himself to this condition of yielding to our desires: although this liberty must be

ruled with a bridle. For we have not liberty given us to crave what we list, so that the godly should frowardly ask whatsoever thing lust suggests; but before God affirmeth that he will grant their requests, he bindeth their affections to the law of obedience and modesty; according as John says, *We know that he will deny us nothing, if we ask it according to his will*; 1 John, v. 14. And for this cause hath Christ endited us this form of praying, Matt. vi. 10, *Thy will be done*, to place a fence around us that we should not preposterously prefer our own wills before God's good will, or without discrimination crave whatsoever comes uppermost. Furthermore, by naming *them that fear God*, David expressly first commends to them awe and reverence, and submission, ere he hold out to them God's loving-kindness, lest they might think it lawful for them to wish more than he alloweth and granteth in his word. That which is added concerning crying out is a kind of correction. For God appeareth not always so easy to be entreated that he performeth at once that which is asked of him. And therefore in this trial of faith there is need of perseverance, that our desires may be confirmed by crying out. Also the last portion, *he shall save them*, is a kind of correction, that we may know how far, and to what end, God fulfilleth his servants' desires; namely, that the very deed itself may shew him to be a faithful keeper of their welfare.

20 *The Lord preserveth, &c.*] He proceeds with the same doctrine, that God is nigh to his servants to help them in their necessities. For wheresoever God is present, whatsoever dangers betide men, still are they sure to escape always safe, through his grace. And that instead of *fear* he now puts *love*, is worth marking. For in adorning the faithful with this title, that *they love God*, he shews that the root of true godliness is to submit themselves to God with willing affection; which very thing springs from faith. For till such time as God shall have drawn us with the sweetness of his grace, this gentle submission will never follow. Though, possibly, this loving, whereof David speaks, has a larger scope. For the faithful not only devote themselves to God to obey his commandment, but also, forasmuch as they know that nothing is more to be desired than to be in communion with him, they labour for this felicity with all their heart. Nevertheless, it is not to be doubted, but that, by the way, here is betokened the chief point of true holiness and righteousness, like as also in Moses, Deut. x. 12: *And now, Israel, what else requireth the Lord thy God of thee, but that thou love him, &c.* As for this fruit of godliness, that we dwell safe and sound under God's protection,

David amplifies it by an antithetical member, avouching that all the ungodly shall come to an unhappy end by the just vengeance of God. Finally, that the close may correspond with the beginning, he affirms that he himself will proclaim God's praises; and by his own example he exhorts all men to do the same. For what some make it, *Every living thing shall bless*, I like not. When Moses, speaking of the flood, says that *all flesh perished wherein was the breath of life*, I confess that under the word *flesh* are comprehended all brute beasts: but wheresoever the word *flesh* is put alone, without any qualification, it is referred only to men. And yet David shews here, not what they would do, but what they should do: as if he should say, God's immeasurable and exhaustless goodness binds all men to praise him heedfully and without ceasing.

## PSALM CXLVI.

*After David has encouraged himself and others, by his own example, to praise God, he corrects a malady that is natural in almost all men, that they should not beguile themselves by dividing their hopes among a variety of objects. And therewith he shews the remedy, that all their hope and trust should be settled upon God. And that they may betake themselves to him the more cheerfully, he touches briefly upon certain testimonies of his power and grace.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul.

2 I will praise the Lord in my life: I will sing unto my God as long as I shall have any being.

3 Put not your trust in princes, in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His breath shall depart, and he return to his earth; in that day shall his thoughts perish.

5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, and whose trust is in the Lord his God;

1 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] These five last Psalms are closed with the same word that they begin with. And after he has enjoined all men, generally, to praise God, he turns his discourse to himself, or, which is the same thing, to his soul, save that under the term *soul* he speaks to all his senses more emphatically. In the second verse, being ready girt, as it were, to perform his duty, he encourages all

men by his own example. Whereby we gather that his emotion was not light and volatile, as many men's is, who blame their own defect in that behalf, and yet presently fall into it again; but a steady and constant affection, which was both followed by diligence, and also proved by the effect to be unfeigned. And it seems, that when David saw his godly enterprises hindered or retarded by Satan's wiliness, he first quickened his own zeal by spurring it forward, ere he would profess himself a guide and schoolmaster to others. For although he was unfeignedly and earnestly minded, yet would he not claim the merit of it until he had gathered greater fervency. Now, if David needed to goad himself forward to praise God, how sharply had we need to be spurred to so hard a matter as is the minding of the heavenly life, with the denial of ourselves. In the mean time, we must know that we shall never be prompt enough to this exercise of godliness, whereof mention is now made, unless we are rigid taskmasters of ourselves. Furthermore, as God nourisheth and sustaineth his servants in this world, that they should occupy themselves in praising him all their life long, David does well in making it his business even to his life's end.

3 *Put not your trust, &c.*] This sentence is inserted opportunely. For the cause of men's blindness is this, that they entangle their minds from time to time in many inventions, so that they are the less able to come free and unencumbered to the praising of God. To the intent, then, that God may obtain his praise full and entire, David corrects and puts away all improper reliances, whereto we are otherwise too prone. And although it is his purpose to withdraw us generally from all men, yet he speaks of princes by name, from whom more is to be feared than other common people. For what help could poor souls hold out, and such as stand in need of others' help themselves! But great men, and men of wealth, allure us deceptively with their splendour, as though there were nothing better than to be shrouded under the shadow of them. But because the simple sort are overpowered with their prosperity, he adds that even the mightiest princes of the world are but the sons of men. Whereby our folly is sufficiently rebuked, when we worship them as demigods; according also as Isaiah speaks, xxxi. 3, *The Egyptian is man, and not God; flesh, and not spirit.* Howsoever, therefore, princes may be furnished with might, treasure, trains of men, and other helps, yet David tells us that we do amiss to put our trust in mortal and frail man, and that we do foolishly to seek help where it is not to be found. Which he explains yet better in the next verse,

where he declares how short and uncertain the life of men is. For although God give a loose rein to princes, even to assault heaven, by attempting what they list, yet the departure of their soul, as though some gust of wind passed by, suddenly overturns all their thoughts and attempts. As the body is the domicile of the soul, what is spoken here will not be understood amiss of the soul: for God calleth it back to himself by death. Nevertheless one may expound it more simply of the breath of life; and it will suit the context better, that as soon as a man's breath is gone out of his body, he will become a carcass subject to decay. Whence it follows, that as many as trust in men do hang upon a breath that passes away. And when he says that in that day all his thoughts pass or flow away, it is a stroke of wit aimed at the folly of princes, who set no bounds to their hoping and coveting, insomuch that they in a manner heap mountains upon mountains, to climb up into heaven: even as that hare-brained Alexander of Macedon did, who, when he heard that there were many worlds, wept because he had not yet conquered one of them, and yet a little after was content with a sarcophagus. And experience itself shews that the thoughts of princes' devices are vast labyrinths. Therefore, lest our hopes might be foolishly wrapped up in them, David affirms that even in princes also the passing away of life shall be swift and momentary, and that all their thoughts shall vanish therewith.

5 *Blessed is he, &c.*] As it had not been enough to reprove the vice, he subjoins the remedy on which true amendment depends; namely, that man's trust is then only steadfast and well-grounded, when it leans upon God alone. For sometimes even worldlings come to this point, that they acknowledge him to be unwise, who grounds his hope upon flesh. And therefore they often are displeased with themselves for trusting so unadvisedly for help at men's hands; and yet for all that, neglecting the remedy, they do not disentangle themselves from their error. The prophet, then, having condemned the vanity which we said was natural in all men, adds wisely, that they are blessed who trust in God. The same order observes Jeremiah, xvii. 5, and 7; *Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*; and afterwards, *Blessed is the man whose trust is the Lord*. Moreover, when he pronounces those to be blessed whom God helpeth, he restrains not the blessedness of the faithful to palpable experience, as though they were not otherwise blessed unless God shew himself their helper openly and in outward deed; but he grounds their happiness in this, that they are thoroughly persuaded in themselves, that they stand not but

by the grace of God. Again, by naming the God of Jacob, he separates him from the rabble of false gods, in whom the unbelievers gloried in those days. And worthily; for although it be the intention of all men to seek God, yet scarce one in a hundred holds the right way. And as he designates the true God by his proper distinction, so shews he also that it comes not to pass but by the assured belief of adoption, that any of us lean upon him. For that his help may be ready for us, it behoves, first, that he be favourable to us.

6 Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them; which keepeth truth for evermore;

7 Which rendereth right to them that be wrongfully oppressed; which giveth bread to the hungry; the Lord that looseth prisoners.

8 The Lord giveth sight to the blind; the Lord lifteth up them that stoop down; the Lord loveth the righteous.

9 The Lord keepeth the strangers, relieveth the fatherless and the widow, and will destroy the way of the ungodly.

10 The Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Sion, *endureth* from generation to generation. Praise ye the Lord.

6 *Which made heaven, &c.*] By all these titles he confirms the former doctrine. For although at the first blush it seem far from the matter to make mention of the creation, yet is it most pertinent to the matter that God's mighty power should succour us as often as any peril impend. For we know with what slight impulses Satan moves us to distrust, and we ourselves are driven to and fro in trepidation at the slightest motions. But if we reflect that God is the maker of heaven and earth, we shall, as his due, yield him this honour, that the governance of the world which he hath created, is in his hand. Therefore in the first title there is a commendation of his mighty power, which ought to swallow up all our fear. But as it were not enough that God can help us, if there went not a promise with it whereby to assure us that he is also willing, and will do it, David proclaims in the second place, that he is faithful and true, so that now there can be no room for doubting, when his will is known unto us.



7 *Which rendereth, &c.*] He enumerates other particular points, as well of God's might as of his goodness, which are so many assurances to ground our trust upon. And all aim at this mark; that God's help shall be offered and in readiness for the most despised, and therefore that our miseries shall be no hindrance but that he will help us, or rather that his own nature will force him forward to help every man according to his necessity. First, he says *he renders right to the oppressed*; that it may come to our remembrance, that although, to our fleshly understanding, he wink at our wrongs, yet will he not neglect that which pertains properly to his duty, which is to hale the wicked to an account of their wrong-dealing. In brief, because God's will is to try his servants' patience by the cross, he speaks here expressly to the afflicted, that they should not sink under their miseries, but quietly wait for their deliverer, who maketh the less haste to come to their relief, that he may be seen as the righteous judge of the world. It follows that he giveth bread to the hungry. Whence also we gather, that he dealeth not always so bountifully with his servants, as to satisfy them with full abundance, but now and then withdraweth his blessing, in order to succour them when they are come to hunger. If the prophet had said that the faithful are full-fed, and, as it were, pampered at God's hand, who would not be out of heart at once in time of famine and penury? Not without cause, then, is God's grace extended yet further, even to the feeding of the hungry. To the same purpose also make the residue, *that God looseth the prisoners, and giveth sight to the blind*. For as it happens from time to time, that the faithful are straitened with heaviness, or oppressed with man's tyranny, or brought to extremity, as if they were shut up in most rigorous confinement, therefore it was necessary that this comfort should be held out to them; namely, that as often as we are reduced to such distresses, it is easy for the Lord to bring us out. *To give sight to the blind*, imports as much as to give them light out of darkness. Therefore, as often as we are bereft of counsel, and are involved in perplexity, in a word, lie confounded and amazed, as though the darkness of death lay upon us, let us learn to give God this honourable title of dispelling the dimness and opening our eyes for us. So also, when he is said to lift up them that stoop, let us learn to gather courage, if at any time we groan under our burden and are ready to faint. For God meant not only to have his praises set forth here, but the reason why he in a manner stretcheth out his hand to such as are blind in prison, and persecuted, is that they should cast their cares and griefs upon him. Neither is it superfluous that he repeats thrice

the name *Jehovah*. For by that means he moves and incites men to seek him, who often in chafing upon the bit had rather rot in their miseries than repair to this sure sanctuary. Whereas, last of all, God is said to love the righteous, it seems to be a sort of correction. For it is well known, that many, although they be hard pressed, groaning in anguish, and lying in darkness, yet feel no comfort at God's hand; and that because even then also they provoke God the more by their stubbornness, and while scarce one in a hundred calls for his grace, they receive the just reward of their unthankfulness. Not without cause, therefore, the prophet, having said generally that God succoureth them that are in misery, now restrains it to the righteous, that as many as desire to feel him their deliverer, should give themselves wholly to him with unfeigned affection.

9 *The Lord keepeth, &c.*] Under *strangers, the fatherless, and widows*, the prophet, by the figure synecdoche, comprehends all such as are destitute of worldly help. For as every man favours his acquaintance and kinsfolk, we know that strangers are commonly exposed to injuries. There are not many to be found that will come forward to defend and maintain the cause of the widows and fatherless. For it seems to be but lost labour where no prospect of reward beams upon them. Therefore, under these examples the prophet teaches that what troubles soever we are grieved with, we ourselves are to blame, if God, who allureth all the afflicted to him so sweetly, stretch not out his hand and deliver us. On the contrary part, he says plainly that all things shall go ill and unhappily with the wicked despisers of God. I told you in the first Psalm, that by the word *way* is betokened the whole course of man's life. God, then, will destroy the way of the wicked, because he will curse all their devices, all their doings, whatsoever they attempt, and whatsoever they take in hand, so that nothing shall go well with them. Although they are mighty in counsel, nay, be politic and wily, and all wealth and ability be at their command, yet shall God overthrow all their hopes. For as in stretching out his hand to those that are his, he leadeth them over all obstacles, or rather through places where no way is, so, again, he will cut off to the reprobates even the open and level way.

10 *The Lord shall reign, &c.*] He turns his discourse to the church, that he may the better persuade all the godly that they shall find God to be such a one in very deed as he has before described him. Moreover, when he calls God *an everlasting king*, we must also consider therewith to what end he reigneth: and the definition must be

drawn from the former commendations. Whence it follows, that as well in death as in life, we shall be safe under the protection of that king who reigneth but for our welfare. If he had said no more than that the Lord reigneth for ever, one might readily have made exception, that we are far removed from his incomparable glory. Therefore he expressly declares that he is bound to his chosen people by a sacred covenant.

## PSALM CXLVII.

*This Psalm also invites the faithful to praise God for two considerations; because his power, wisdom, goodness, and other virtues shine forth in the general government of the world, and in all the several parts of heaven and earth. But especially because that, with his peculiar grace, he cherisheth and maintaineth his church which he hath chosen freely; yea, and both setteth it up again when it is fallen, and also gathereth it together when it is scattered.*

1 Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing unto our God; for it is a pleasant thing; and praise is comely.

2 The Lord is he that buildeth Jerusalem; and he shall gather together the dispersed of Israel.

3 Healing the broken-hearted, and binding up their sores.

4 Numbering the multitude of the stars, and giving every one of them their names.

5 Great is our Lord, and great in power; and of his wisdom there is no number.

6 The Lord is he that relieveth the miserable, and casteth the wicked down to the ground.

1 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] Although he rehearse here the benefits that God vouchsafeth to all mankind, yet is there no doubt his discourse is directed peculiarly to the faithful, who only have eyes to behold God's works, whereas the faithless are bereft of understanding, through the blindness and insensibility of their own mind. And he not only treats of God's general benefits, but also commends especially his grace, which was apparent in his chosen people. Moreover, that the church may address herself the more cheerfully to sing God's praises, he says that the exercise is *good, pleasant, and sweet*, indirectly rebuking the depravity

of nearly all mankind, to whom it is irksome to hear any mention made of God, but a singular pleasure to forget God and themselves, that they may follow their own inclinations the more licentiously; therefore, that men may learn to take pleasure in this exercise of godliness, the prophet tells them that praise is *comely* or *amiable*; for the word *תִּנְנִי* may be taken both ways.

2 *The Lord is, &c.*] He begins with God's special grace, which he vouchsafed to his church when it was his will to adopt one nation in preference to all others, and also to choose a fixed place wherein he would be called upon. For whereas he is called here *the builder of Jerusalem*, it is not referred so much to the outward form and building as to the spiritual serving of God. And it is a common metaphor to use the term of *building*, or *temple*, when the church is treated of. The effect is, that the church is not built by man's labour, but by the heavenly power of God. For neither is it the worthiness of the place that caused Jerusalem to be God's only dwelling-place upon earth; neither hath Jerusalem gotten such high honour by the wisdom, policy, labour, or help of men, but because it pleased God to hallow it to himself. True it is that he used the labour and service of men when he reared himself a sanctuary there; but yet there is no reason that his so doing should eclipse his grace, which alone distinguished that holy city from all other cities. But the prophet calls God the builder and architect of his church for this purpose, that we may know that by his power it continues to stand firm, or, if it fall into decay, is restored. Whence also he gathers that it is in his hand, and at his appointment, to gather them together that are dispersed. For the prophet meant here to comfort the miserable exiles that were thrown here and there, that they might hope to be gathered together again out of their dispersion, so that they might grow together again into one body, because God had not adopted them in vain. Therefore, as he had commanded a temple and an altar to be built to him at Jerusalem, the prophet cheers the Jews, that were as exiles from their own country, with good hope of return; as if he should say it was no less the peculiar work of God to set up the church again when it is defaced and overthrown, than it was to lay the foundations of it at the beginning. It was not, then, the prophet's purpose simply to commend God's free goodness in the first setting up of the church, but to reason from the original of it, that as God forsaketh not the work of his own hands, he will not in anywise suffer his church to decay utterly, which he hath once built, that he may maintain it to the end. And this

consolation ought to occur to us at this day in the dismal dismemberment of the church which is to be seen everywhere, so that we may hope that all the elect which are grafted into Christ's body, although miserably dispersed like members severed from the trunk, shall notwithstanding be gathered together into the unity of faith; and that the mangled body of the church, which is rent daily in pieces, shall be restored to perfect soundness again, because God will not suffer his work to decay utterly. In the next verse also he continues the same doctrine. For hereto tends the similitude, that although the church be afflicted with sore diseases, yea, or brought to the point of destruction, and although she be pierced through with many wounds, yet will God promptly and easily heal her. Whereby it appears, that in these divers manners of speaking there is but one thing repeated; namely, that although the state of the church do not always flourish, yet shall it always continue safe, because God will miraculously heal it as a body that is full of sores.

4 *Numbering the, &c.*] Because the gathering together of the people that the prophet has treated of might seem incredible, they that think the same is confirmed in this verse have probable grounds to go upon. Thus, therefore, do they construct the prophet's words: that, as it is not a harder matter to gather together men that are scattered and dispersed, than to number the stars in the sky, there is no reason why the wandering and banished Israelites should despair of return, provided they resort with one consent to God as their only head. No less likely a conjecture were it also, that the prophet alludes to the promise in Gen. xv. 5: *Behold the stars of the heaven, and see if thou canst number them: even so shall thy seed be.* As, however, immediately after, the prophet treats of the universal order of nature, in my judgment it will be more plain to expound this verse, also, of the wonderful workmanship of the sky, wherein God's incomparable wisdom shines forth; while he so governeth the various, manifold, and intricate courses of the stars, as that they go not astray even a point: he attributeth to each of them its definite and distinct office, so that nothing is confused in so vast a crowd. Worthily, therefore, does he exclaim immediately, that God is great, and infinite as well in power as in wisdom. Whereby also we are taught that there can be no greater perverseness than to purpose to measure the works of God, wherein he often putteth forth incomprehensible wisdom and power, by our limited comprehension.

6 *The Lord is he, &c.*] This commendation avails pecu-

liarly to the confirmation of our hope in adversity, that our hearts may not faint in the trial of the cross. Whence, also, we gather, that though the fathers were cherished more tenderly under the law, yet were they not utterly privileged from the warfare wherein God exerciseth us at this day, that we should seek true rest elsewhere than in the world. Therefore if, in time of sore persecution, misgivings should creep over us, where that help is which God hath promised shall be always ready for us, let us call to mind this sentence, that we are therefore brought low that we may afterwards be lifted up on high by the hand of God. Also, if at any time envy consume or sting us, when we see the ungodly wanton in pleasure, let us remember what the prophet says here, that they are hoisted up on high that they may fall headlong down. For when he says that they shall be cast down to the ground, there is no doubt but he covertly rebukes their pride, whereby they advance themselves above the clouds, as though they were not of the number of men.

7 Sing unto the Lord in praise ; sing unto our God upon the harp ;

8 Which covereth the sky with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, making grass to grow upon the hills ;

9 Which giveth to cattle their food, and also to the young ravens that cry unto him.

10 He will have no pleasure in the strength of a horse, nor delight in the legs of a man.

11 The Lord delighteth in them that fear him, which put their trust in his mercy.

7 *Sing unto the Lord, &c.*] Again he exhorts to set forth God's praises, and therewith declares that there is no lack whatever of matter, as new proofs of his power, goodness, and wisdom, from time to time force themselves before our eyes. First, he says that *he covereth the sky with clouds* ; which alteration ought to arouse our senses, if we were not besotted indeed. Surely, howsoever God's countless miracles shine in the heaven, yet if the sky should remain always equally serene, his working would not be so evident as when he overcasteth the sky with clouds, withdraweth the refulgence of the sun, and putteth as it were, a new face upon the world. Afterwards he tells them, that by that means God provideth beforehand for all living creatures : because thereby both grass grows up, and moisture is ministered to



make the earth fruitful. Thus God, together with a proof of his power, setteth before our eyes an assurance of his grace and fatherly love towards mankind : nay, rather, he sheweth that he neglecteth not even the wild beasts and cattle. And this is worthy to be noted above all things, that there falls not a drop of rain upon the earth but by the command of God. Philosophers, indeed, find the original of rain in the elements : neither is it to be denied that the clouds are engendered from the gross vapours which the earth and the sea exhale. But the secondary causes should not so obscure God's providence, but that he may give to the earth moisture necessary to bring forth fruits. Finally, as the earth, gaping through drought, after a sort declares her drought with opened mouth, so also, on the other side, God droppeth down drink by raining. Truly, he could give freshness to it by other secret means, so that it should not fail ; but the watering of it is, as it were, an ocular exhibition of the continual care which he hath of us.

9 *Which giveth to cattle.*] By setting forth one particular, he unfolds more plainly that which he had said before ; namely, that God provideth food for all living things. And when he says that cattle are fed rather than men, that makes to the enhancement of the matter. Certain it is, that the world was created and garnished with its fruitfulness and abundance for man's sake ; and the nearer we approach to God, the more doth he manifest his bounty towards us. But if he disdain not to extend the same even to brute beasts also, it is hence evident to any one that he is truly a father and nurturer to us. The reason why he names the *ravens*, a most despised kind of birds, is to teach us that God's bounty penetrates to all parts of the world. And where he says that *the young ravens cry to God*, no doubt he alludes to their croaking. Notwithstanding, he puts us in mind, by the way, that they confess their want, if God reach them not food from out of heaven. For when the Jews fable that the old ravens forsake their young, as soon as they are hatched, and that worms are bred in the barks of trees to feed them with, they follow their usual course. For they make no conscience nor blush to devise what they list, without colour of truth, as often as they meet with any obscurity. But let it suffice us, that the whole order of nature is so guided by God, that not even the young ravens are destitute of food, who by their croaking confess themselves to be hungry ; and that their want were remediless, except God succoured them.

10 *He will have no, &c.*] After the prophet has shewn that no part of the world is devoid of God's bounty, he

avouches by express words, that men have no strength at all more than God himself breatheth into them from heaven. And this adds he purposely, to reprove the pride wherewith wellnigh all men are naturally puffed up, so that they lean on their own strength. The meaning of the words is: Let man come furnished with all his strength, and let him bring all his helps with him wherein he thinks himself to excel most, and yet shall he be but a smoke and a leasing. Nay, rather, if he arrogate never so little to himself, by that obstacle alone he will obstruct and prevent God's grace, by which alone we stand. Under the strength of a horse, he denotes, by the figure synecdoche, every kind of defence. Not that the helps which God giveth us, displease him of themselves, but because we had need be drawn away from unholy trust in them. For nothing is more common with us, than to be intoxicated with outrageous pride, as soon as we have a ready supply of any requisite. And therefore against the strength as well of men as of horses, he sets the fear of God and the trust that leans upon his mercy; as if he should say, this point of modesty is chiefly required at our hands, that in worshipping God devoutly and holily we should depend upon his grace. Whence we gather that no strength is condemned except that which robs God of the honour due to him.

12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion.

13 For he strengtheneth the bars of thy gates; and he blesseth thy children in the midst of thee.

14 Which setteth thy borders in peace, and satisfieth thee with the fatness of corn.

12 *Praise the Lord, &c.*] After he has treated of God's benefits in general, he turns his discourse again to the faithful, who only, we told you before, are endued with perfect taste to receive with true thankfulness the benefits which the world gobble up without tasting. Moreover, he addresses the whole church under the name of Jerusalem, because the faithful in those days kept their holy assemblies there, and repaired thither, as it were, under God's standard. And because he will presently make mention again of God's universal governing of the world, yet now, he commends the grace of God, which he sheweth only toward the faithful; namely, in defending his church; in graciously cherishing it; in bountifully enriching it with all good things; and finally, in preserving it safe from all annoyance and trouble.

For, in saying that *the bars of her gates are strengthened by God*, he means that the holy city is singularly fortified by God's protection, so that she need not be afraid of enemies. To the same purpose also makes the other phrase, which follows: that is, that *all her borders are set in peace*; which is as much as to say, as that her enemies are kept off by the hand of God, so that they can put her to no disquiet and trouble. Not that the church has peace and rest on all sides, and suffers no invasions; but because God setteth his hand manifestly against them to beat back their assaults, so that she may without fear despise all her enemies round about her. Unless, perhaps, any one would extend the word *peace* further, according as frequently it is taken for a prosperous and happy state. But as there is mention made of *borders*, the former exposition seems to suit the place better. Afterwards is added God's inward blessing, whereby it comes to pass that her citizens have a prosperous and happy dwelling in her, and at the same time are fed abundantly, even to the full. Not that God's children always have a supply of luxuries, which would corrupt them, such is the proneness of the flesh to wantonness; but because in their daily food they discern God's bounty more manifestly than the unbelievers, who either blind themselves with over-pampering, or torture themselves with miserable anxiety when they want, or else, burn always with insatiable covetousness. But especially in old time God manifested his fatherly love to the fathers under the law in abundance of victuals, because it behoved them at that time that they should be trained to higher aspirations by such elements.

15 When he sendeth forth his commandment to the earth, his word runneth very swiftly.

16 Which giveth snow as wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who is able to stand before his cold?

18 He will send his word, and melt them; his breath shall blow, and the waters shall flow.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

20 He hath not dealt so with every nation; neither hath he manifested his judgments unto them. Praise ye the Lord.

15 *When he sendeth, &c.*] Again he touches upon cer-

tain particulars of God's works, that shine everywhere in the order of nature. But as the world fancy that the changes in the earth and air, which ought to be records of his power, happen by chance; before the prophet treats of *snow, hoar-frost, and ice*, he declares expressly that *the earth is ruled by his commandment and nod*. For the sending forth of his commandment is nothing else than the mysterious impulse whereby he moderateth and tempereth all things. For were it not that he so commandeth and ordaineth it, there would be no agitation in the elements; neither would they be carried to and fro of their own force, except his secret commandment went before. And he says, that *God's word runneth swiftly*, because as soon as God sheweth what he will have done, all things run together ready to obey him. And unless we hold to this principle, however subtly we may examine the intermediate causes, all our acumen will be as nought. As for example, Aristotle has so exerted his acute genius in his work on Meteors, that he disputes most exactly of the natural causes; and yet he leaves out this chief point, wherein any person, however uninstructed and incapable, at least being endued with true religion, surpasses him. For more than stupid must he needs be, whom such sudden snows and hoar frosts inform not of this swiftness of God's word. Therefore, unless we would philosophize blindly on the works of God, we must always begin with this principle, that all the parts of the world wait upon God's pleasure, so that the whole course of nature is nothing else but prompt execution of the things that he hath commanded. For surely, when the waters freeze, when the hail is scattered through the air, when hoar frosts darken the sky, thereby it appears how effectually he speaketh. But if the greater part of the world be amazed at these numerous miracles, the very sharpness of the cold that stiffens our bodies may compel us to wonder at God's mighty power. For surely, seeing that the heat of the sun scorches us in summer, and again the winter succeeding congeals everything, this alteration, which were incredible without experience, cries aloud that there is some divine power that rules supreme in heaven.

19 *He sheweth his word, &c.*] Here mention is made of a somewhat different manner of speaking from the former. For God is said to command the senseless creatures, whom he guideth secretly to obey his will by a hidden inclination, after a different sort from that in which he commandeth men endued with understanding, whom he teacheth by articulate speech, that they may wittingly and willingly follow whithersoever he calleth. And although the benefits, which he

recounted erewhile, are worthy of no small estimation, yet does this far surpass all the rest, that in setting forth the doctrine of godliness, which is a treasure of everlasting salvation, he vouchsafeth to execute the office of a schoolmaster towards his chosen people. For how little would it avail the church to swim in perishable goods, and to be defended from the violence of enemies, if her hope mounted not above the world! This, therefore, is the greatest token of his favour, that he offereth us the light of life in his word. And therefore not without cause is it added here as the consummation of true and substantial happiness. And hereby we may learn, not only to entertain God's doctrine with reverent and godly obedience, but also to embrace it affectionately, because nothing can be devised more sweet, or more amiable, than that God should take upon him the charge of our welfare, yea, and testify the same familiarly, by leading us to him by the hand. For the mark that this doctrine aims at, is this; that in the thick darkness of this world, and amid the many perplexing errors, in the uncertainties of which Satan makes the world to reel, our most dear and good father shineth before us until we are gathered into the heavenly inheritance. And it is to be marked, that the things which Moses and the prophets executed by the command of God, are ascribed to God himself. For then, verily, is the doctrine of godliness honoured as it ought to be, and esteemed as it deserves, when we lift up our minds to God, who in suchwise useth the service of men, as that he in the mean time displaceth not himself from the office of the supreme and one great teacher. Therefore its proper majesty is here claimed for the word from considering the person of the author of it. And at length the prophet enlarges this grace by a comparison, declaring that all other nations had not been so dealt with. For if the reason be demanded, wherefore God preferred that one people before all other, surely the very prerogative will lead us to the fountain of their free election. For we shall find that the children of Israel differ from the rest of the world, not in their peculiar virtue, but because God, passing over the rest, vouchsafed to adopt them.

## PSALM CXLVIII.

*That he may the better and more effectually express how much God is to be praised in his works, he summons all creatures above and beneath to set forth his praises. For though he begin with the angels, yet he by and by extends his address to the brutes, and mute elements, intimating that there is no part of the world wherein God's praises resound not, because he uttereth everywhere a clear and manifest witness of his power, goodness, and wisdom. At length he glides down to men, whom God himself hath ordained to be the proper heralds of his praises in this world. But because the unbelievers, as they are blind to consider God's works, so also are dumb to set forth his praises, the prophet in the end of the Psalm calls upon the Israelites as peculiar witnesses, to whom God had revealed himself more nearly.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from out of the heavens: praise ye him in the high places.

2 Praise ye him, all ye his angels: praise ye him, all ye his hosts.

3 Praise ye him, ye sun and moon: praise ye him, all ye bright stars.

4 Praise ye him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created.

6 And he hath stablished them for ever and ever: he hath set them an ordinance, and they shall not pass it.

1 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] He seems to comprehend here as well the stars as the angels, yea, and the very sky itself, and the air, and whatsoever is engendered there. For immediately after there follows a partition, wherein he exhorts first the angels, and then the stars and the waters of heaven. As touching the angels, considering that they were created to be continually occupied in this exercise of godliness, it is no wonder they are placed in the first rank, when the setting forth of God's praises is treated of. And therefore in that notable vision which is written in Isaiah vi. 3, the cherubim cry, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.* And in many other places the scripture brings in the angels praising God with such commendations. What incitements, therefore, does alacrity so eager as this require! or if they



must be quickened, yet what is less seemly than that we, who are benumbed with such slothfulness, should take upon us the office of encouraging! David, therefore, who not only equalled not the angels in zeal, but came far short of them, could in nowise be a fit encourager of them. But neither was that his purpose; for he meant rather, simply to testify that nothing was more acceptable, nor more desirable on his part, than to join with the elect angels, in devout consent of praising God; neither was it against reason, that he, to the intent he might address himself the more cheerfully to the displaying of God's praises, should call the angels to join him, who run to it of their own accord, or rather shewed him the way. In the second part of the verse he terms them the *hosts* or *armies* of God, because they are evermore at hand to undertake God's behests. For, as it is written in Daniel vii. 18, *ten thousand times ten thousand stand about his throne*. This name of *hosts* is transferred to stars also, both because they are distinguished by their marvellous order, and also because they execute God's command with miraculous swiftness. But here the angels are called *God's armies* in the same respect that they are in another place called *principalities and powers*, Col. i. 16; namely, because God uttereth his power by the hands of them.

3 *Praise ye him, ye sun and moon, &c.*] This passage gives no countenance to the dream of Plato, who imagined that the stars are endued with reason and understanding: for the prophet places not them in the same degree that he placed the angels in just now, but only gives us to understand, that God's glory shineth everywhere, as though they sounded out his praises with a loud voice. Whereby also the ingratitude of men is indirectly rebuked; for whosoever shall give heed to consider God's works, yea but a little, he shall hear this sweet music. For does not the sun, as well with his brightness as with his heat, and his other singular gifts, magnify his creator? The stars, when they go through with their courses, while they beautify the sky, enlighten the earth, do they not also sound God's praises trumpet-tongued? But because we are both deaf and insensate, the prophet does well to call them to witness, to correct our slowness. Furthermore, when he calls them *The heavens of heavens*, without doubt it must be referred to the spheres. For the eclipses and other phenomena shew clearly, as well that the fixed stars are above the planets, as also that the planets themselves are fixed in different orbits. This excellence of workmanship the prophet, not inaptly, commends; terming them expressly, *the heavens of heavens*; not that, in very deed, there are many heavens,

but because God's marvellous wisdom, which he employed in creating the heavens, cannot be magnified with pomp enough: for he did not jumble the sun, moon, and stars together, but assigned to each of them its proper situation and dwelling-place, and also ruleth their manifold courses. Furthermore, as under the name of *heavens* he comprehends also the air, or at least, whatsoever space extends from the mid region of the air upward; he calls the rains, *the waters that are above the heavens*. For there is no reason why some should imagine that the waters abide above the four elements. And the prophet betokens plainly the falling of the rain, when he says that those waters are from above. Too slavishly also do they bind themselves to the letter, who imagine that there is a certain sea in the skies, as though the waters were always remaining there; when we know that Moses and the prophets, to accommodate themselves to the capacity of every of the most uninstructed, are wont to speak after the manner of the common people. And therefore it were preposterous to test the things that are read in them by the rules of philosophy. Even as in this place, that God holdeth the waters suspended in the air, the prophet commends as a miracle, because it seems to be against nature that they should mount aloft, and then stand firm in a void space, being fluid. And therefore in Ps. xxxiii. 7, it is said that they are hid there, as it were shut up in bottles. In this account the prophet has borrowed his manner of speaking out of Moses, Gen. i. 2, who says that the waters were separated from the waters.

5 *Let them praise, &c.*] Because he speaks of creatures devoid of sense, he passes to the third person. Whereby we gather that his speaking hitherto in the second person, was to move men the more; for he has required no other praise, than such as may teach us that neither the stars have their beginning from themselves, nor the rain was created by chance; because though there stand such manifest evidences of God's mighty power daily before our eyes; yet we pass over the workmaster of them with foul insensibility. Therefore the pronoun *he* is emphatic; as if the prophet should say, The world is not eternal, as heathen men dream, nor formed by the concourse of atoms; but this most goodly order we behold sprang into being in an instant at the command of God. Moreover, having spoken of the creation, he adds what is more worthy to be observed; namely, that he gave them a precept which remains inviolable. For many, though they grant the world to be made by the power of God, yet after doing so, fall away to senseless imaginings, as though the order of nature stood now by it-

self, and God were asleep in heaven. Worthily, therefore, does the prophet insist upon this point, that the heavenly creatures not only were once for all created by God, but also are now ruled by his government, and not only that a secret power was once put into them; but also that when they perform their offices, they yield their labour and service to God for the uses they were ordained for.

7 Praise ye the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all depths.

8 Fire and hail, snow and ice, and windy storms that do his commandment.

9 Mountains and all hills, fruit-bearing trees and all cedars.

10 Beasts, and all cattle, creeping things, and feathered fowls.

7 *Praise ye the Lord, &c.*] Now he comes down to the lower parts of the world, although, not observing exact order, he again introduces the mention of those things that are engendered in the air, as lightnings, snow, frost, and storms. For these ought rather to have been placed in the former class; but he had respect to the ordinary capacity of men. The effect is this, that which way soever we turn our eyes, the testimonies of God's mighty power encounter us everywhere. And he begins with *whales*. For as immediately he adds *depths*, I doubt not but that by the word תַּנִּינִים, that is to say, *dragons*, he means the fishes of the sea, such as *whales*. Neither is it against reason, that matter of praise to God should be fetched out of the sea, which is replenished with so many wonders. Afterwards, he mounts up again to hail, snow, and storms, which he says execute the command of God; because neither is the sky overcast with clouds, nor does a drop of rain fall from the clouds, nor are thunders awakened by chance; but all these changes are governed by God's secret appointment, whether it please him to testify the sweetness of his goodness by moistening the earth, or to chastise their sins by storms, hails, and other inconveniences. For this doctrine serves to many uses, that we may know that when dearth is at hand, although the earth burn up with continual heat, be parched and dry, yet God hath rain in readiness, to take away the dryness thereof as soon as he intimateth his pleasure. And if the seed rot in the ground, or the corn come not to maturity by reason of continual rain, then also must

fair weather be sought for at God's hand. Furthermore, if the thunderclaps abash our hearts, the prophet warns us to call upon God, in whose hand it is to allay all commotion, even as in his wrath he hurleth his bolts against us from his hand. For this doctrine must not be taken so coldly as to suppose that the creatures put forth a power impressed upon them at the beginning, while God enjoyed his ease, as irreligious men vainly talk; but, above all things, we must hold that God watcheth over his creatures, and that not a thing moves, but at his immediate command; even as in Ps. civ. 4, we saw that *the winds are his messengers, and flaming fires his ministers.*

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth.

12 Young men, yea, and maids; old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his home only is high; his praise is above all the earth and the heavens.

14 And he hath exalted the horn of his people; *which is* a praise to all his meek ones; *even* to the children of Israel, the people which is near unto him. Praise ye the Lord.

11 *Kings of the earth, &c.*] At length he turns his discourse to men, in respect of whom he exacts as well from earthly as from heavenly creatures, that they should proclaim God's praises. And, forasmuch as kings and nobles are dazzled with the splendour of their own dignity, so that they proudly despise God, deeming the world to have been made for their sakes; he exhorts them peculiarly to their duty, and making his opening from them, rebukes their unthankfulness in that, whereas they are bound to God above all others, yet they defraud him of his due praise. For truly, considering that the condition of the human race is the same in all, from the very creation, the higher any man is advanced, and the nearer he approaches to God, so the stronger the bond by which he is bound to set forth the praise of his grace. The less bearable, therefore, is the unthankfulness of kings and princes who exempt themselves from the general obligation when they ought to be guides and instructors. He could, indeed, in one word, have exhorted all men, according also as in general he addresses the people. But by repeating the word *princes* thrice, he intimates that they are slack and

slow to this duty, if they are not urged forward. Afterwards follows a partition of sexes and ages, that all, without exception, may perceive that they were created to this end, and therefore ought all alike to join hand and heart in accomplishing it. As concerning old men, the more God hath prolonged their life, so much the more does it become them to be occupied in publishing his praises. But yet he couples young men with them, because, though they have not so much experience from long intercourse with the world, yet are they not to be excused, if they perceive not the power of God's grace in their own vigour. Where he speaks of *maidens*, the particle *¶*, that is, *even*, is not superfluous. For it is inserted to amplify the matter; as if he should say, that even young maidens also, (who are not taught so liberally as males, because they seem to be born for household services,) fail of their duty, if they perform not their part in praising God with the rest of the church. Whence it follows, that all, from the least to the greatest, are bound by this universal law.

14 *And he hath exalted, &c.*] Because we have seen in the last Psalm that God's working is more evidently apparent in the church than in the general structure of the world, therefore the prophet has annexed this clause; that the church is shielded by God's hand, yea, and armed with power against all enemies, so that even in the midst of dangers she may dwell notwithstanding in safety. It is well enough known that by *the horn* is denoted *strength*, or *dignity*. The prophet therefore means, that God's blessing is manifestly seen in his church and chosen people, inasmuch as it thrives and flourishes not but by his operation. And there is a covert comparison betwixt God's church and all opposing powers, because it must needs be fortified by his defence, seeing it is assailed on all sides. Hence the prophet infers that God is a praise to all his meek ones, because they have cause to rejoice in themselves, and to praise his name for his singular grace which he vouchsafeth to them. Moreover, by calling the children of Israel *the people that are nigh to God*, he puts them in mind of the free covenant that God had made with Abraham. For whence comes this nearness, but because God preferred an obscure and despised sojourner before all people. For the reason of the distinction is not to be sought elsewhere than in God's only love. And though the whole world belong equally in all respects to God, he revealed himself familiarly to the sons of Israel, and brought them near to him, though they were not less aliens to him than the whole race of Adam. Whence that of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 8, *When the*

*lofty one distinguished the nations, and portioned out the people, he stretched out his line upon Jacob. He therefore shews that the reason why God decked with such glorious gifts this one people, slender and despised as they were, is that he hath adopted them.*

## PSALM CXLIX.

*If any one choose to compare this Psalm with the former Psalms and the next ensuing, which will be the last, he will find no other difference but this; that whereas the prophet (whosoever was the author of the Psalm) has heretofore intermingled God's peculiar grace, whereby he defendeth and cherisheth his church with his general providence, whereby he maintaineth the whole world; now he treats only of the benefits wherewith he pliieth his church, and in the next Psalm he makes mention only of his power in general.*

1 Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song: let his praise be in the congregation of the meek ones.

2 Let Israel rejoice in his maker: let the children of Sion rejoice in their King.

3 Let them praise his name upon the flute: let them sing unto him with timbrel and harp.

4 For the Lord hath pleasure in his people; and he will glorify the poor with deliverance.

1 *Sing unto the Lord, &c.]* This opening proves what I said lately; namely, that this exhortation is restrained to the faithful alone, because the rare bounty which God useth towards them alone, yields them more plentiful matter of praising. And it is a likely conjecture that this Psalm was made at such time as the people were in captivity, or else after they were returned from the captivity of Babylon into their country. For we shall see the restitution of their decayed state promised them in the text. And, in my opinion, the prophet meant to give the faithful courage to hope for complete deliverance, the preludes whereof had suddenly and beyond all hope appeared already in the promised deliverance. For as the church was not restored immediately, but rather recovered its strength with difficulty, and after a long lapse of time, this consolation was exceeding necessary for them. Also it was the Holy Ghost's intent to remedy future mischiefs. For scarcely had the church



begun to take breath, when it was harassed again with various distresses, and also oppressed with the cruel tyranny of Antiochus, which was followed by a horrible havock. Wherefore, not without cause does the prophet encourage the godly to hope for the accomplishment of God's grace, that they may believe that they shall be shielded by the hand of God, until at length the Messiah arise to gather all Israel together. For, as we have seen heretofore, *a new song* is set against common and ordinary songs, wherewith God's praises are daily set forth among the faithful, even as it is their continual exercise so to do. Whence it follows, that he speaks of some rare and unwonted benefit of God, which worthily challenges a notable and special thanksgiving. And whosoever was the author of the Psalm, I think he alludes to that place of Isaiah, xlii. 10, *Sing unto the Lord a new song*, where he preaches of the future restitution of the church, and of Christ's everlasting kingdom. In the second member there is a covert promise or prophecy. For though he proceed in exhorting the faithful to mutual harmony in singing God's praises among themselves, yet he shews that the time will come when the church shall coalesce again into one body, to advance God's praises in solemn assembly. For we know that the Israelites were so scattered, that they ceased to sing their holy songs, even as also in another place they complain that they were challenged to sing in the way of mockery, *How shall we sing the Lord's songs in a strange land?* Ps. cxxxvii. 3. Therefore he exhorts them to put themselves in readiness to hold holy assemblies again after their sorrowful dispersion.

2 *Let Israel rejoice, &c.*] He dwells still upon the same subject; namely, that the faithful should certainly assure themselves that it is not for nought that their stock is chosen out of the whole world, but that God will always be mindful of his covenant, that the graces or free benefits which he hath bestowed upon them may not decay or be quenched. Therefore, although the possession of the land of Canaan, which was the pledge of their adoption, were taken from them for a time, yet does the prophet call God their *maker*, and *the king of the children of Sion*, to put them in remembrance, that when they were adopted to have prerogative above all other nations, it was a kind of new creation. So in Ps. xcv. 5, the Israelites are called *the work of God's hands*, not only because they were created by him, as all other men were, but because he had made them anew, and garnished them with fresh dignity, that they should be separated from the whole of mankind. The name of *king* has a larger scope. For the prophet

teaches that God not only once made this people, but also made them to this end, that they should always be ruled by his government. The musical instruments whereof he makes mention, belong to the time of their early training; which we must bear in mind, lest, by an absurd following of them, we might draw those things to our uses which were peculiar to the people of old time. And the prophet confirms that which I said just now; namely, that the holy assemblies which had been abolished for a time, should be restored again within a while, there to call upon God's name after the ordinances of the law.

4 *For the Lord hath, &c.*] Of the word **לצדק** we have seen in other places: here it expresses a free favour; as if the prophet should say it was God's own mere good pleasure, that led him to choose this people for himself. Out of this fountain springs that which follows in the second member; namely, that God will give a new glory of deliverance to the afflicted. For the Hebrews call the poor and afflicted, **עניים**, but afterwards they transfer over this name to the meek, because, as full-feeding engenders insolence, so are afflictions wont to tame the pride of the flesh. With seasonable comfort therefore does the prophet assuage the heaviness of their present miseries, that the faithful, who are cast down with adversity, may nevertheless in hope look for the glory that is not yet seen. The effect is, that because God hath lovingly embraced his chosen people, it is not possible that he should leave them for ever in such great miseries.

5 The meek ones shall triumph in glory, they shall sing aloud in their beds.

6 The advancements of God shall be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and corrections among nations;

8 To bind their kings in chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9 To execute upon them the judgment that is written: This honour shall be given to all his meek ones: Praise ye the Lord.

5 *The meek ones shall, &c.*] Here, in speaking of mirth, loud singing, and glorious exaltation of God, he proves more manifestly by the effect, that he treats not of any common benefit. For except the people had been preserved by miracle, there had been no reason for such great gladness

and even triumph. By which words he puts them further in mind, that the people were not brought back from captivity, that they should presently fall away again, but that they should flourish in all kinds of blessing. And he therefore makes mention of their *beds* that the faithful might hope for continual rest under the protection of God. Also he tells them that they shall be armed with weapons and power, not only to keep off their enemies, but also to chase them far and wide, even until they have subdued the kings and nations to whom they themselves had been vassals before. And by *two-edged swords* understand swords that cut both ways, for in those days their swords had but one edge.

7 *To execute vengeance, &c.*] This certainly was altogether incredible, as well in the time of their captivity as after their return. Neither was it fulfilled before the coming of Christ. For howsoever the Maccabees and their posterity placed a yoke upon the neighbouring nations, yet was the same but a shadowy foreshewing to lead the minds of the godly to something further. But as Haggai, ii. 10, cried out at that time, that the glory of the second temple should be greater than the glory of the first, so here is promised a happier state than had been in all ages before. Therefore, though the Jews were diminished, and their estate impaired, yet does the prophet assure them that they shall reign over all the nations that had been troublesome and hostile to them. Therefore seeing they were under tribute, and dwelt in Jerusalem but by sufferance, it behoved them to embrace that by faith, which, according to fleshly reason, might seem to be but a fable, and to lift up their minds to God's infinite power, which easily overcomes all impediments of the world. By the vengeance which he speaks of, understand the revenge which the Israelites should take, not by impulse of private grief, but by the command of God, that no man should gather hence that it is lawful for us to revenge our own wrongs. The next verse, where mention is made of kings and nobles, contains an amplification of the matter. For had he spoken of none but the nations and heathens, it might have been restrained to the obscure and common herd. But this is a far more glorious thing, that even kings and other chief estates are dragged to execution in chains and fetters. Moreover, you must always remember what I said just now; namely, that until Christ appeared, there was never seen half of that great gloriousness. For although the wealth of the realm was not a little increased under the Maccabees, yet is it scarce to be made any account of, save so far as God, by that remedy, maintained the realm from decay to the coming of Christ. For, that prophecy of

Jacob's, Gen. xlix. 10, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come*, must be borne in mind. But the Maccabees were descended from another tribe, whence it follows that the lawful succession was then displaced, and the happy state of the people could no more be grounded upon those victories, than if a man should build a castle in the air. And God seemeth to have taken away the sovereignty then from Judah purposely, lest that prosperity might intoxicate the minds of the godly, even as the greater part, waxing proud of those renowned victories, neglected the true and perfect redemption. Therefore, as the prophet treats here of the perfect happiness of the people, it follows that he has an eye to the Messiah, that the hope and desire of him might neither by prosperity nor by adversity depart out of the hearts of the godly.

9 *To execute upon them, &c.*] He mitigates the former sentences, whereby he seemed to have armed God's people to cruelty. Truly at the first blush it seemed against reason that they who a little before were called meek ones, are now sent out with swords drawn to slaughter everywhere, and to shed human blood; for how agrees that with meekness? but where God himself is the author of it, it is a righteous sentence, and not cruelty. Therefore when mention is made of *judgment that is written*, the prophet warns us that the Jews were armed by the command of God, for the maintenance of their own liberty, whereof they were wrongfully deprived by foreigners and tyrants, and so could they not be blamed for executing the judgment that was enjoined them. For insipidly is this place expounded, when the prophet's meaning is not perceived to be this; namely, that he calls back the Jews to God's commandment, and puts a bridle upon them to restrain their heat, lest they might attempt anything upon their own suggestion. As if he should say, There is no other revenge permitted to God's children, than such as is agreeable to their calling, because when every man is borne along by his own impulse, there is no room for moderation. Another question may also be raised. For as in Matt. xii. 20, Christ is said to have come without noise, or crying, insomuch that he brake not a bruised reed, so he impresses the same character on his people. Nevertheless, the solution is easy; namely, that Christ is also armed with an iron mace, wherewith to break all rebels in pieces. And in Isaiah lxiii. 2, he is described as bloody, and such a one as having everywhere slain his enemies, is notwithstanding not wearied with slaughter. Nor indeed is it any marvel, that the mercy which is rejected with scorn is turned to rigour, considering that the whole world is full of stubbornness.

Furthermore, this doctrine may conveniently be applied to our improvement thus: that what is spoken of the two-edged sword, belongs peculiarly to the Jews, and cannot be properly applied to us, who have not the like commission given us in these days, save that princes and magistrates are by God's command armed with the sword to punish all violence; but it is a case of special calling. In respect of the whole body of the church, we have another sword put now into our hand; namely, the sword of the word and the spirit, with which we may slay in sacrifice to God, those that heretofore were his enemies, or deliver them up to everlasting destruction, except they repent. For what Isaiah, xi. 4, prophesies of Christ; namely, *he shall destroy the wicked with the word of his mouth, and slay him with the breath of his lips*, extends itself to all his members. If the faithful keep themselves quietly within these limits of their vocation, they shall at length perceive that it was not promised in vain, that they should be revenged of their enemies. For as I said just now, God, by calling us back to the written judgment, restraineth as well our hearts as our hands, that we should not adventure further than he commandeth. In the end of the verse, when he says that this honour shall redound to all the meek ones in general, he not only exhorts us to the pursuit of godliness, but also administers to us comfort, that we should not think that our meekness and patience will be to our loss, according as the greater part of men work themselves up to cruelty, because they think there is no other way to protect their life than by doing as others do. Therefore, although the faithful be neither strong as giants, nor dare stir a finger without God's command, but are even of a calm spirit, yet does the prophet declare that they shall have a glorious deliverance out of all their afflictions.

## PSALM CL.

[*Let the contents of this last Psalm be fetched from that immediately preceding.*]

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye God in his sanctuary: praise ye him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise ye him in his mighty power: praise ye him according to the multitude of his greatness.

3 Praise ye him in the sound of the trumpet: praise ye him upon the viol and the harp.

4 Praise ye him with timbrel and flute : praise ye him with strings and organs.

5 Praise ye him with sounding cymbals : praise ye him with loud sounding cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

1 *Praise ye the, &c.*] This Psalm commends, in general, the spiritual service of God, which consists of the sacrifice of praise. There is no doubt but that by *the sanctuary*, in this place, is betokened heaven, as in many other places: for the second member is an exposition, wherein the same thing is repeated. But instead of *the sanctuary*, there is put *שָׁמַיָא*, which signifies *the expanse of heaven*: whereto is added the title of power, because God's inconceivable power shines forth there, so that we must needs be ravished with admiration of him at the sight of the heavens. For the exposition of some, Praise ye him, ye angels that dwell in the heavens, and ye men that dwell under the firmament, it is constrained and irrelevant; since the prophet, that he may the better awaken men, who else are cold in singing God's praises, bids them lift up their eyes to the heavenly sanctuary. Finally, that God's majesty may obtain due reverence in the world, the prophet brings him sitting supreme on his heavenly throne; and continues the same sentence in the second verse, magnifying God's mighty power and greatness, which he had set forth in the heaven as in a glass. Therefore, if we sincerely desire to have our minds kindled to this exercise of godliness, let us call to remembrance God's immeasurable power and greatness, and they will easily shake off all drowsiness from us. For though our minds are unable to comprehend such immensity, yet will the taste of it alone affect us seriously. And God will not reject the praises which we offer according to our small ability.

3 *Praise ye him, &c.*] As for the Hebrew words, that signify the instruments of music, I trouble not myself about them. Only let the readers bear in mind, that here are recounted many sorts which were in use in the worship under the law, thereby the better to express that God's children ought no less to occupy themselves now, than they did then, in setting forth God's praises: as if he should bid them cheerfully bestow all that they have on this exercise of godliness, and engage themselves wholly in it. Neither was it without reason that God in old time exacted those manifold singings under the law, that he might reclaim the minds of his servants from the vain, or rather froward, delights, to



which men are too much devoted, to holy and profitable mirth. For our flesh wantons with strange extravagance, so that many invent monstrous things for their amusement; while our highest pleasure is to suppress the remembrance of God. This perversity could not otherwise be corrected, unless God held in the weak and uninformed people by many restraints, and continual exercises. Therefore the prophet, purposing to exhort the faithful to lavish all their mirth upon the praises of God, gathers together all the instruments of music that were then in use, and admonishes them that they ought all to be consecrated to the service of God.

6 *Let everything, &c.*] Because the word נשמה signifies a *breath* or *blast*, and also whatsoever has life, or breathes; this sentence might therefore be extended to all kinds of living things; as we have seen in the former Psalms, that the publishing of God's praises is attributed to senseless creatures. But as under the name of flesh are often understood men only, so also it will be by no means absurd that these words should be addressed to men, who, although they have the breath of life in common with brute animals, yet are designated by the title of things that breathe, as also of things that live, above others. The reason which induces me to understand it so is this: the prophet having hitherto exhorted the people, who were accustomed to the ceremonies of the law, to sing the praises of God, at length turns himself to the whole human race; tacitly intimating that the time would come when those same songs which then were heard in Judea only, shall resound everywhere. And by this prophecy we were joined in one harmony with the Jews, that God may be worshipped with continual sacrifices of praises among us, until, gathered with them into the heavenly kingdom, we join the elect angels in singing an everlasting Hallelujah.

THE END.















